BEYOND DOUBT

A Dossier on Gandhi's Assassination

compiled and introduced by
TEESTA SETALVAD

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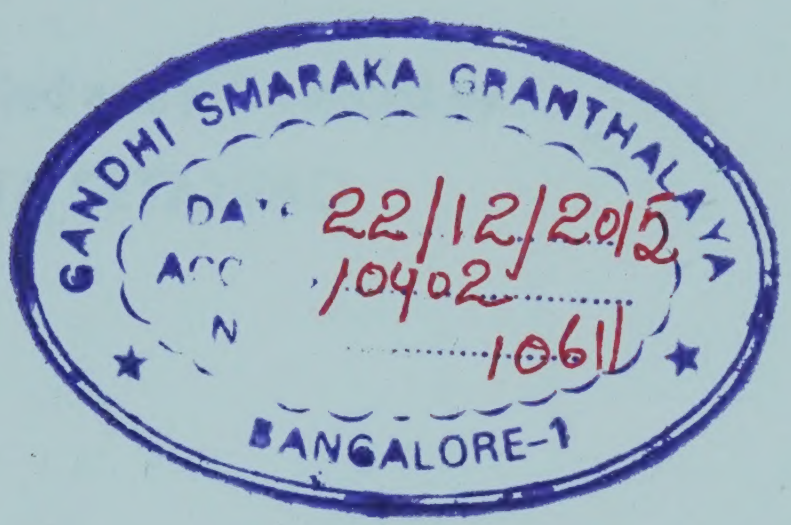
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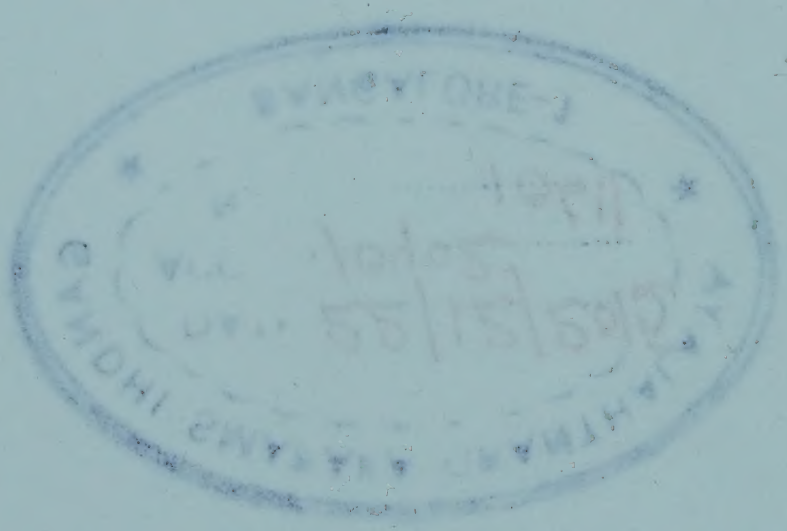

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TEESTA SETALVAD

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Preface

The compilation of this volume has a singular purpose. Planned for over a year, as the dark clouds of majoritarian politics made their bid for power, and won, in the May 2014 Lok Sabha elections, publishing archival documents related to Gandhi's assassination became vital. The press note issued by the Government of India banning the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), as also related governmental documents, are even now in danger of being destroyed. Attempts to hold the present government responsible for this destruction through the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005 have not been entirely successful.

Gandhi, a political figure with a vast following across India, South Asia and the world, has had to live with more than his share of detractors and this is to be expected. His appeal, even after the Partition, in Pakistan led to two moving editorials by Faiz Ahmad Faiz that we carry in this dossier. I am grateful to historian and friend Dr Mubarak Ali for helping me access these from the SAARC Library Secretariat.

However, it is the visceral denigration and hatred that Gandhi has drawn from particular regions of India, specifically with the emergence of a rabid Hindutva right, that needs to be understood. In this, Maharashtra and Gujarat are at the forefront. Substantive and well-documented responses to these calculated attempts have also emerged from the very regions where Gandhi has been so reviled. They deserve a place in the national discourse. Many of these responses have been previously published in *Communalism Combat* (2000 and 2004). Fifteen years later, thanks to Tulika Books, we are placing these documents with comprehensive references together in the public domain.

The volume attempts to weave together these archival documents from the Government of India records related to developments after the assassination, with the translation of works in Marathi de-constructing the ideology responsible for the political murder. To date, much energy and resources have been spent by the Sangh in obfuscating the careful planning and conspiracy behind the killing.

A translation of Jagan Phadnis's book *Mahatmyachi Akher* (Last Days of the Mahatma) will be available for the first time to readers in English in this volume. The translation is by Suresh Bhosale and Bhakti Bhalwankar. Seven editions of this important work have already been published by Lokvangmaya Griha, Mumbai, and we are thankful for their permission to bring out the English translation. I particularly thank Prakash Vishwasrao for help in this regard. The first edition was published in 1994 by Anil Mehta of Mehta Publishing House.

My career that began as a mainstream print-media journalist was mentored and guided by among the best in Marathi journalism. Jagan Phadnis, of *Maharashtra Times*, was one of them. In this work, which is his fourth book, Phadnis has contextualized the conspiracy behind the killing of Gandhi while bringing to Marathi readers, possibly for the first time, details of the multiple attempts on Gandhi's life. Gandhi is a political figure who, while being deeply religious at a personal level, remained modern and inclusive in his vision of nation-building. To date, Gandhi presents a real threat to the politics of Hindutva majoritarianism and this is sharply emphasized in Phadnis's work.

Between 1998 and 2004, when a government under the direct influence of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ruled India, brazen moves were made to glorify the killers of Gandhi in the public sphere. Pradeep Dalvi's play *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* (I am Nathuram Godse Speaking) was systematically used for this purpose. Historian Y.D. Phadke's *Nathuramayan*, a series of articles carried in the Marathi evening newspaper *Mahanagar*, had effectively analysed the politics behind this play that deliberately manipulated historical facts with the sole objective of glamourizing Gandhi's assassin. Professor Mukta Rajadhyaksha translated this series into English which was published in the October 2000 issue of *Communalism Combat*, and it is now reproduced in this volume. Chunibhai Vaidya's pamphlet, originally in Gujarati but also translated into seven languages, was published by the Mumbai Sarvodaya website (mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org) and is included here with grateful acknowledgement. It analyses both the Marathi and Gujarati versions of the play. Chunibhai Vaidya of the Gujarat Lok Samiti was a doyen of the anti-communal movement in Ahmedabad who passed away recently. 'The Last Hours of the Mahatma' by Stephen Murphy is gratefully reproduced from the website www.mkgandhi.org, so painstakingly put together by T.K. Somaiya of the Bombay Sarvodaya group. Somaiyaji's personal commitment to communal harmony and the furthering of Indo–Pakistan ties is legendary.

During the first minority NDA government, efforts were made to drastically tamper with the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (*CWMG*) and Tridip Suhrud, presently Director of the Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, had closely analysed, in an article for the *Economic and Political Weekly*, this deeply flawed exercise. We are grateful for permission to reproduce that analysis.

Frontline carried an important interview by Arvind Rajagopal with the brother of Nathuram, Gopal Godse, in February 1994, soon after a memorial meeting held in Bombay (1993) that was extremely embarrassing for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has tried, unsuccessfully, to disown connections with Gandhi's killer. Gopal Godse was co-conspirator in the killing and convicted for the offence. Nathuram Godse made his lifelong association with the Sangh clear in his statement at the murder trial. This was originally published in 1977 in a volume titled *May It Please Your Honour*. Godse said, 'I am one of those volunteers who joined the Sangha in its initial stage' (p. 142). He stated that he left the RSS to do more direct political work in the Hindu Mahasabha (he does not say when). But his brother Gopal Godse suggests to *Frontline* that Nathuram never really left the RSS and adds further that the statement at his trial was meant to alleviate the pressure on the Sangh, which was banned following Gandhiji's murder. A leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, went on to found the Jana Sangh, a political party that was a forerunner of the BJP. We are grateful to *Frontline* for permission to reproduce Arvind Rajagopal's interview and accompanying article here, as well as to *Outlook* for permission to reproduce excerpts from another first-person account (1998) of former RSS chief, Professor Rajendra Singh (Rajju Bhaiya). In this account, he applauds the 'intention' of Godse while saying that his methods may have been wrong. L.S. Hardenia, senior journalist and activist from Bhopal, provided copies of the document showing the RSS's mouthpiece, *Organiser*, advertising for sale the books of both Nathuram Godse and Gopal Godse on the assassination.

To understand the cruel, militaristic training that the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha carry out, we have included an important excerpt from the novel *Tamas* by Hindi writer Bhisham Sahni, which was translated by Jai Ratan. We are grateful to Kalpana Sahni for permission to include this.

D.R. Goyal's *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* remains one of the most important books on this organization and hence the extract from the book, as also from *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags* that tells readers of the non-participation of the RSS and the Hindu right in the Indian freedom movement.

The second volume of this dossier will bring to readers the Report of the Justice Kapur Commission, constituted to investigate the Gandhi assassination, with a detailed introduction and annotations.

This edition would not have seen the light of day but for the patient hand-holding of Indira Chandrasekhar of Tulika Books. Many thanks also to Shad Naved for forbearance in the face of interminable delays on my part. Several ideas over the last few decades have emerged at the cosy SAHMAT *adda* in New Delhi, with Rajendra Prasad, a close and dear friend, being my constant and invaluable sounding board.

It has been a difficult year and some parts of the introduction were

written by me at the Crime Branch Office in Ahmedabad while undergoing 'interrogation' for the last in a series of (four) fabricated cases against others and me. Even as we go to press with this book, there are vindictive efforts to curb the political liberties of survivors of the Gulberg carnage, Tanvir Jafri, Firoz Gulzar Pathan, Salim Sandhi, Javed Anand and myself, all with the message of 'teaching us a lesson'. The collective movement for justice and accountability for the survivors of 2002, with the Citizens for Justice and Peace as its backbone, has ensured the conviction of 117 influential perpetrators to life imprisonment. This does not sit easy on the shoulders of the regime in Delhi well known for its vindictiveness. The stoic courage of the survivors of the carnage and the dedicated and unstinting support of our entire legal team in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi has enabled the battle to continue. Hundreds of supporters, individual and institutional, have ensured that our work carries on.

Without the dedication of the entire Sabrang team, Irfan Khan, Alice Fernandes, Surekha Kalmaste, Santosh Keer, Vaishali Agre, Pradeep Devrukhkar, Surendrasingh Pauwar, none of my work would have been possible. Our family has provided me unstinting support in this bleak year, as have the trustees of both Citizens for Justice and Peace and Sabrang Trusts. Most importantly, Javed Anand remains a friend, lover and comrade-in-arms in all that I do.

January 2015

TEESTA SETALVAD

Introduction

TEESTA SETALVAD

> By *Ram Rajya* I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by *Ram Rajya* Divine Raj, *Khuda ki Basti* or the Kingdom of God on Earth.
>
> – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi[1]

At the heart of the visceral animosity that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu Mahasabha and all their affiliates have against Gandhi is his deep, reasoned and passionate commitment to a composite Indian nationhood. His writings in *Young India* and *Harijan* are well documented, as also his subsequent clarity on that issue which is unequivocal.[2]

Faced with the growing appeal of communalists across the religious spectrum, in the early to mid-1900s, Gandhi remained firm in his commitment to equal citizenship based on human rights and dignity. His equally deep commitment to reform in a caste-ridden Hindu order also led him to launch campaigns for the dignity and place of those deemed by a discriminatory caste hierarchy as 'untouchables', who, in his vision of assimilation, he named 'Harijan' (God's people). While his approach to the caste system and its attendant discriminations, not least his compromises and strategy around the Vykom Satyagraha,[3] has rightly irked those committed to a more radical approach to the caste question, the fact that Gandhi, among others, made *dignity* central to the issue of mass mobilization of those hitherto treated by Hindu caste society as invisible or worse, was an equally weighty factor behind the animosity of the Sangh.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948 was a declaration of war and a statement of intent. To those forces who, 67 years ago, conspired in the killing, the act declared a lasting commitment to India as a Hindu Rashtra, and announced how the RSS and its affiliates would be at perpetual war with the secular, democratic Indian state as well as any and all who stood to affirm these principles. It remains to be seen how far they could and are still prepared to go. The assassination was also an act to signal the elimination of all that the Gandhi and the national movement against imperial-

ism stood for. Equality of citizenship and a non-discriminatory democratic governance have been, and remain, anathema to the Sangh's ideal political order.

Today, more than ever, when a majoritarian government dominated by the RSS rules India, it is critical to place the developments leading up to this political killing in a historical perspective. Readers of this volume will benefit from the first English translation of Jagan Phadnis's imortant book, *Mahatmyachi Akher*, which was originally published in Marathi in 1994 and ran into its seventh edition in 2013. This book carefully documents the fact that the assassination of Gandhi was not an isolated act but the last successful one of a series of attempts that began as early as 1934. Since 1934 there had been a total of five attempts on Gandhi's life: in July and September 1944, September 1946, and 20 January 1948. Nathuram Godse was involved in two of the previous attempts besides the last one, i.e. in a total of three.

The Gandhi murder trial commenced on 22 June 1948 in the historic Red Fort in Delhi before Shri Atmacharan, who was specially appointed for the purpose. Appeal was heard by a full bench of the East Punjab High Court at Shimla from 2 May 1949. The final judgment was delivered on 21 June and the guilty punished. The J.L. Kapur Commission was appointed in November 1966 and through this the Government of India instituted another inquiry into the Gandhi murder. Shri J.L. Kapur, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, made a fresh and thorough inquiry into the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi, albeit in a different context. The Commission sat at different places and examined 101 witnesses and 407 documents before it published its report in 1969. A second volume in this series will bring to readers the Report of the J.L. Kapur Commission.

The Karachi Resolution of the Indian National Congress of March 1931, to which Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad were all party, also stipulated the state's religious neutrality. The Karachi session of the Congress took place in tumultuous times, with Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru having been executed just a week before. The resolution passed at this session, which was drafted by Gandhi, admired the bravery and sacrifice of the three martyrs and reiterated the goal of '*Poorna Swaraj*'. As critically, this session of 1931, which was presided by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, resulted in the Congress adopting a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy which represented the party's social, economic and political programme. It came to be known later as the Karachi Resolution. It was this resolution that made the Karachi session memorable because, for the first time, it tried to define what would be the meaning of *Swaraj* for the common Indian. Some important aspects of these resolutions were: basic civil rights of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association; equality before the law; elections on the basis of universal adult franchise; free and compulsory primary education; substantial reduction in rent and taxes;

better conditions for workers including a living wage and limited hours of work; protection of women and peasants; government ownership or control of key industries, mines and transport; and protection of minorities. Relevant sections constituted a legal attack on the institution of untouchability: section 4 declared that all 'citizens are equal before law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex'; section 6 endowed all citizens with equal rights and duties with regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public interest maintained out of state or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public; section 10 decreed universal adult suffrage. These principled statements were later included in the Constitution of India. With this the Congress established a strong and democratic basis for its political programme for many years to come.

Under Gandhi's guidance and leadership, communal amity remained central to the constructive programmes of the Congress Party. Muslim intellectuals and leaders of national stature such as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Dr Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Badruddin Tyabji, Maulana Shaukat Ali and Jauhar Ali were proud members of the Congress fold. While the larger national movement, represented by the Congress and the revolutionaries, was surging ahead with a wider vision of the inclusive foundations of Indian nationhood, majoritarian as well as minority communal forces were at play, in parallel, pushing their narrow, hate-driven, communal agendas. In 1937, at the open session of the Hindu Mahasabha held at Ahmedabad, V.D. Savarkar, in his presidential address, asserted: 'India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main – the Hindus and the Muslims.'[4] By 1945 Savarkar had gone to the extent of stating, 'I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory. We, the Hindus, are a nation by ourselves, and it is a historical fact that the Hindus and the Muslims are two nations.'[5] It was this sentiment of separate and irreconcilable identities of the followers of these religions that led to the communal holocaust and the formation of Pakistan. If the Muslim League and Jinnah need to be squarely scrutinized for their responsibility in articulating a politics that eventually led to a communal bloodbath, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, with their consistently divisive politics, cannot escape their share of the blame.

Arguably, as much as Gandhi's and the Congress's commitment to a secular and composite Indian nationhood was a deep source of resentment for the proponents of Hindu Rashtra, it was the democratic and egalitarian agenda articulated by the national leadership through the Karachi Resolution that they also resented. The attempts on Gandhi's life that began in 1934 were a response to the dominant political articulations of nationhood, caste, and economic and other democratic rights which directly challenged the idea of a hegemonistic and authoritarian Hindu Rashtra. In 1933, a year before the

first attempt on his life, Gandhi had declared firm support to two Bills, one of which was against the abhorrent practice of untouchability.

The run up to Independence and, unfortunately, Partition, was the arena or battleground for fundamentally opposing notions of nationhood. While over a hundred years of sustained movements and mobilizations to throw off the British yoke came together in the united battle of all Indians against foreign rule, the early to mid-1900s saw the emergence of sectarian and communal definitions of Indian and Pakistani nationhood. With the birth of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the RSS, these movements – which on different occasions actually collaborated with the British – were in constant battle with the larger national movement. This volume also contains valuable references to how and when these right-wing protagonists collaborated with the colonial rulers.

Parallel to Gandhi's clear articulations about India as a secular state from the early 1930s, there was also the emergence of clear positions among the national leadership on the caste question as well as on the issue of the economic rights of large sections of Indians.

Repeated use of the term 'secular' appears quite early in Gandhi's writings and speeches of 1933.[6] A comprehensive understanding of the political context around this period of time is critical to locate the motivations that led to the systematically planned attempts on his life. As mentioned above, two proposed laws were before the Central Legislature at the time, and one of these related to untouchability. Though much reviled in public discourse for his compromises on the caste question, Gandhi was clear that a 'custom that is repugnant to the moral sense of mankind' should be outlawed by a secular law. Such a practice, he said on 6 May 1933, 'cannot and ought not to have the sanction of the law of a secular state'. In November 1933, he defended the Bill against the charge that it was an undue interference in religion, saying that there were many situations in which it was necessary for the state to interfere even with religion; only 'undue' interference ought to be avoided.

In 1934, a year after his speech in support of the law against untouchability in the Central Legislature, the first attempt on Gandhi's life was made. At the time there was obviously no question of the grouse against him being the issue of Partition or the transfer of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. It was the fact that Gandhi was a vocal proponent of India as a secular state, and, moreover, that he was at the forefront in striving for legal mechanisms to abolish discriminations based on religion, that made him unpopular among Hindutva fanatics.

The *Manusmriti*, dating back to about 1600 years, was and remains a guiding doctrinaire for the Sangh and its affiliates including the Hindu Mahasabha. They subscribe particularly to its offensive categorization of the ultimate superiority of the *dwij* or twice-born Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, and the rest of society as *mlechhas* or barbarians (Shudras, Muslims and other

non-Brahmans fall into this latter category, with women too not in the twice-born category). Gandhi's real and spiritual commitment to reform the Hindu faith by according a position of dignity to the so-called untouchables, while deemed patronizing by the followers of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, remains repugnant to the Hindu communalists.[7]

On 27 January 1935, while addressing some members of the Central Legislature, Gandhi said that 'even if the whole body of Hindu opinion were to be against the removal of untouchability, still he would advise a secular legislature like the Assembly not to tolerate that attitude'.[8] On 20 January 1942, while discussing the Pakistan scheme, he remarked: 'What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice, or the use of public conveniences? The difference can only be in religious usage and observance, with which a secular state has no concern.'[9] From then until he was shot dead in cold blood on 30 January 1948, his responses and articulation on the dissociation of religion from politics only became clearer and sharper. This means, in effect, that he is a great threat to both past and present-day proponents of a Hindu Rashtra.[10]

In 1925, Gandhi offered unqualified support to the Vykom Satyagraha, launched by the local leaders of Travancore (in present-day Kerala) who were protesting the ban on the entry of 'untouchables' on roads surrounding the Vykom temples. Through *Young India* Gandhi carried the message of the struggle of the satyagrahis to the rest of India until, finally, the matter began to be addressed by the national press. In March 1925 he went to Vykom and addressed public meetings there, besides holding discussions with leaders of the orthodoxy who were opposing the campaign. Finally, in January 1926, the Travancore government had to yield to the satyagrahis and announced the opening of roads around temples in Vykom to the 'untouchables'. Gandhi pushed further, insisting that all public institutions, including temples, be opened to all. A few years later, on 20 September 1932, he undertook a fast unto death to implement the Communal Award. The Poona or Yervada Pact which came in its aftermath also gave a huge impetus to the movement for justice to the 'untouchables'.

Diffferences between Ambedkar and Gandhi on this issue have been widely documented and analysed. Ambedkar's valid criticism of the goals and priorities of the All India Untouchability League (later re-named the Harijan Sevak Sangh), which he thought were individualistic and reform-driven and not aimed at the political and social emancipation of all Dalits, can be seen, among other places, in the correspondence between the two great leaders and thinkers. Even on the two Bills that came before the Central Legislature in 1933, Ambedkar and Gandhi had detailed discussions, as well as differences. The point, however, remains. Gandhi, who drew his moral force from his religion and wished to fundamentally reform and alter its approach to the

structured inequity and indignity of caste, posed a great threat to those who would rather speak in the name of the Hindu faith, i.e. the fanatical fringe.

It is to contextualize and comprehend the politics, motivations and circumstances behind the killing of Gandhi that this volume is dedicated. In *Communalism Combat*, since its establishment in 1993, we have made efforts to de-construct the motives and machinations of the religious right. In the October 2000 issue of the magazine, we carried extracts from Jagan Phadnis's book *Mahatmyachi Akher*, and an English translation of a series of articles by Y.D. Phadke, titled *Nathuramayana*, on Pradeep Dalvi's play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye*. These had been originally published in the Marathi evening newspaper *Mahanagar*. Chunibhai Vaidya's pamphlet, first published in Gujarati by the Gujarat Lok Samiti, Ahmedabad, has since been translated into seven Indian languages.[11] In August 2004, the eleventh anniversary issue of *Communalism Combat* reproduced archival Government of India documents relating to decisions and events immediately following Gandhi's assassination. We feel the need for certain unassailable archival truths – which are actually at risk, at the present moment, of being destroyed – to re-enter the public domain.

RSS Held Responsible for Gandhi's Murder

The first of these are documents issued by the Government of India immediately following the assassination of Gandhi. A ban was imposed on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) through a government resolution dated 2 February 1948. The document reproduced here, which was first published in the August 2004 issue of *Communalism Combat* as part of the cover story titled 'Hey Ram', was obtained from the archives of the government. The language of this resolution is unequivocal when it speaks of the determination of the government

> to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name. In pursuance of this politics, the GOI [Government of India] has decided to declare as unlawful the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in the Chief Commissioner's Provinces. Similar action is also being taken in the Governor's provinces.

The resolution links the banning of the RSS – within five months of India becoming independent and within two days of the dastardly killing of Mahatma Gandhi – to the 'undesirable and even dangerous activities carried out by individual members of the Sangh who have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition.' 'They have been found', the resolution reads,

> circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect firearms, to create disaffection against the government and suborn the police

> and the military. . . . The objectionable and harmful activities of the Sangh have, however, continued unabated and the cult of violence sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Sangh has claimed many victims. The latest and the most precious to fall was Gandhiji himself.

In all minor and major instances of communal conflagration these tactics of the Sangh and its affiliates are evident. From Jabalpur in 1961 to Trilokpuri (Delhi) in 2014, the sustained hate-ridden rumour-mongering and campaigns like '*love jihad*' or '*ghar vapsi*' have been matched by sectarian offensives by minority communalists, be they in Saharanpur (2014) or Mumbai (2015). As a result, today, as in 1947–48, distrust between different sections of the Indian people is being carefully perpetuated with the overt or silent complicity of the regime in power.

Drawing unequivocal conclusions on the culpability of the RSS, the Government of India in 1948, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Home Minister, held the RSS guilty for the killing of the Mahatma.

The story does not end here. The communication(s) between the Government of India, through its Prime Minister and Home Minister, and the RSS following the ban generated a great deal of heat, with falsehoods perpetuated by the Sangh distorting even these official statements. On 11 September 1948, Sardar Patel wrote a letter to the RSS chief M.S. Golwalkar, strongly decrying the Sangh's hate tactics before and after Gandhi's assassination. This letter has been quoted in full in D.R. Goyal's book, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*.[12] Importantly, this and another letter written by Patel to the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Dr Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, dated 18 July 1948, make the links between the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha clear.[13]

The letter to Golwalkar is of particular significance since it outlines the kind of activities the RSS was indulging in. Patel wrote:

> But the objectionable part arose when they, burning with revenge, began attacking Mussalmans. Organizing Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing. . . . *All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison and enthuse the Hindus and organize for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the valuable life of Gandhiji.* Even an iota of sympathy of the Government or of the people no more remained for the RSS. In fact the opposition grew. Opposition turned more severe, *when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death*. Under these conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS. (Emphases added)

The critical need to place these communiqués/documents in the public domain cannot be overstressed – especially because there has been a concerted bid to distort history and deflect the RSS's culpability in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination.

A press note issued by the Government of India on 14 November 1948 relates to the outright rejection of the representation made by M.S. Golwalkar to the Home Ministry, to lift the ban on the RSS. This press note, obtained from the archives of the Government of India, was also published in the August 2004 issue of *Communalism Combat*. While clearly stating the government's decision not to lift the restrictions on the RSS, it makes strong observations on the 'anti-national, often subversive and violent activities of the RSS'. The Government of India took into account the considered opinion of the Provincial Governments before arriving at its decision. An article in *The Indian Express*, dated 7 February 1948, reported that an RSS leader from Nagpur who had presented Godse with the revolver with which he killed Gandhi had been arrested. Other persons arrested included Professor Varahadpande of the City College, Nagpur. The report stated that another professor from Nagpur had told his students a day before the assassination that 'Gandhiji would be murdered'. An associate of the gang of conspirators, Devendra Kumar was reported by the same newspaper to have surrendered to the District Magistrate, Mirzapur and taken to Lucknow under armed escort.

All these and other archival documents are today under grave threat of destruction by the present government. Headed by a *pracharak* of the RSS, the present government seeks to insidiously complete a sinister project put into motion with Gandhi's assassination. Between 5 June and 7 July 2014, i.e. within nine to thirty-nine days of assuming power, 11,100 files of the Ministry of Home Affairs were destroyed by the government. A group of historians and other citizens immediately joined a campaign started by the academician Purushottam Agrawal to seek information on the destroyed files. The response received on 27 August 2014 to the campaign's query, filed under the Right to Information Act, did not clarify matters. Following an uproar in Parliament in its then ongoing monsoon session, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said that 'documents pertaining to Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Louis Mountbatten and others are safe'. However, there is no clear information to date on the issue and the suspicion remains that these papers may have been destroyed. Neither is there an unequivocal assurance of the preservation of crucial Central and Provincial government documents relating to the Gandhi assassination, the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha.

An analysis of the replies provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to a detailed and thorough application filed under the Right to Information Act (2005) by Venkatesh Nayak, of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI),[14] suggests the following. First, after more than a month of

destroying the 11,100 files, the MHA does not have, in one comprehensive list, details of all the files that were destroyed. Secondly, the Public Information Officer's (PIO's) reply that even a list of the files that were weeded out has not been compiled till date indicates that the procedure for properly identifying files for weeding out was simply not followed.[15] Thirdly, the refusal to give details of this process both to Parliament when the issue was debated and to the request made under RTI is shocking, to say the least. What worsens the case is the audacity of the PIO's reply, sent more than thirty days after the request was received in the MHA, that the information would be given only on payment of a fee. Under the RTI Act, it is simply not open to a PIO to charge a fee for giving information thirty days after the date of application; nor can the supply of information be deferred to a date beyond thirty days. Fourthly, the PIO's reply to this query is simply not a sensible one at all. Let alone the names, even the designations of the officers who authorized the destruction of the files is being denied in a roundabout manner. Fifthly, the PIO's reply indicates that the National Archives was not consulted at all during this weeding-out process. The age of the weeded-out records is a serious question which was not satisfactorily answered either in Parliament or in response to the RTI application. Finally, what then was destroyed in June–July 2014 remains a mystery, which neither the Home Minister's reply in the Rajya Sabha nor the PIO's reply clarifies.

The RSS's direct association with Gandhi's assassination is clearly documented in contemporaneous government documents and records, and subsequently. But the fact of this association remains tenuous in the minds of sections of the public due to deliberate machinations to blur this direct connect. Gandhi is too valuable to be abandoned by the Hindu communalists; and so, like Ambedkar, he is sought to be appropriated in different ways. This appropriation, however, comes at the cost of manipulating what he stood for when it came to secularism, caste and the very nature of democracy. Thus the assassination of the Mahatma, the first act of terror in independent India, remains a subject matter of deep contestation thanks to the systematic efforts of the proto-fascist project of the Hindu right.

Hence the effort, through this volume, to prevent the cynical appropriation of the figure and thought of Gandhi, and to ensure that these documents become central to discourse in the public domain. Every 30 January, we ritualistically observe the violent and tragic loss of a man who was deeply wedded to the idea of equality of all Indians before the law; a man, moreover, who lived and breathed commitment to non-violence and inter-community harmony. Yet we sometimes fail to fully appreciate how committed he was to questions of secularism and democracy, and to the vital need for peace and harmony between all Indians. Few among the present generations are aware of the fact that the assassination of Gandhi was a culmination of decades of

systematic brainwashing and hate-mongering, the success of a bitter and narrow ideological worldview that threatens the very existence of India today. The ideology responsible for the assassination of Gandhi found his twin commitments to secular democracy and the dignity of all Indians a threat to the survival of its narrow view of Indian nationhood. From 1934, over a period of fourteen years, on as many as six occasions, attempts were made to kill Gandhiji. The last one by Godse, on 30 January 1948, was successful.

It would be inappropriate if this volume did not acknowledge a huge debt of history to D.R. Goyal's *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*.[16] In this first significant study of the organization, to which the author himself once belonged, the chapter titled 'Murder of the Greatest Hindu' (which is reproduced here) illuminatingly records how political expediency altered Morarji Desai's view of the RSS as first expressed in his autobiography.

> On 30th January, 1948 while Bapu was on his way to a prayer meeting three shots were fired at him from a revolver. Bapu fell and died soon after. Nathuram Godse was the man responsible for the murder. He had been a worker of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Poona and also the editor of a paper.

Thus wrote Morarji Desai in his autobiography, published in 1974. This passage used to be read out by a guide at New Delhi's Gandhi Smriti, P.N. Damodaran Nayar as part of the narration of the story of Gandhi's martyrdom, and no objections had ever been raised till the coming of Janata Party to power. On 8 October 1977, when Morarji, then the Prime Minister, accompanied by his colleague Sikandar Bakht (of the Bharatiya Janata Party), Minister of Housing, paid a visit to Gandhi Smriti, this part of the guide's narration was brought to his notice – apparently by RSS members and sympathizers – as something objectionable. 'The Prime Minister's spontaneous reaction', according to the guide, 'was that these were facts of history and that nobody can change history.' Thereafter, Goyal's book tells us, the guide was beaten up by some members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and unceremoniously dismissed by the management which was under the control and influence of the Housing Ministry. When a question was raised in Parliament, Morarji Desai declared on the floor of the House that he no longer held the opinion he had expressed in his autobiography. As Goyal aptly puts it, this is a glaring instance of defence of the RSS motivated by considerations of political expediency.

As significantly, Goyal traces the fact as expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to Sardar Patel on 26 February 1948, that Bapu's murder was 'not an isolated business but part of a much wider campaign organized chiefly by the RSS'. Going through newspapers of the period (a task that begs undertaking), Goyal states that political stalwarts like Ram Manohar Lohia,

J.P. Narayan and several others concurred with Nehru, and in fact criticized Home Minister Patel for showing leniency towards the RSS.[17]

Apart from the deliberate bid to delude the Indian public about the facts of Gandhi's assassination, a Goebbelsian propaganda has tried to link it to the 'Rs 55 crores being given to Pakistan'. Crude and oversimplistic, this motive has no bearing at all on the reality of the time. When the unsuccessful attempts at murder of 1934, 1944 and 1946 were made, the proposals regarding Partition and the release of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan had not come into existence. The conspiracy to do away with Gandhi was conceived much earlier. The grounds advanced for this heinous crime are therefore another instance of a clever, though extremely limited, rationalization to hoodwink the people. Jagan Phadnis, Y.D. Phadke and Chunibhai Vaidya deal with this at length in their respective work, which form an important part of this volume.

It was during the early years of the domination of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (from 1996 onwards), and then during the NDA-I regime led by the BJP between 1999 and 2004, that a public furore was first drummed up around Pradeep Dalvi's play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* (I am Nathuram Godse Speaking). Historian Y.D. Phadke's de-construction of this play and its theme – in a series of articles first published in the Marathi evening newspaper *Mahanagar*, and later as a book, *Nathuramayana* – is vital to understand the motives behind the controversy. Today, under the NDA-II regime, efforts are afoot once again to glamorize the killer of Gandhi by staging the play in multiple shows.

Dalvi's play is based on two books by Gopal Godse, co-conspirator and brother of the assassin Nathuram Godse: *Gandhi Hatya Ani Mée* (The Gandhi Murder and I) and *Panchavanna Kotinche Bali* (The Sacrifice of Fifty-Five Crores). Here, I will not go into the intellectual integrity of Dalvi, who has deliberately and with malicious intent played with historical facts in his work to glamorize a hardened criminal. These aspects have been dealt with by Phadke in his *Nathuramayana*, excerpts from which are a part of this volume. What is important to grasp is Phadke's conclusions about Dalvi's motives, which reveal that the demands for the staging of the play (and now a film adaptation) were neither spontaneous nor isolated instances of creative expression, but a carefully orchestrated and financed effort by the Sangh to alter the understanding of the circumstances of Gandhi's killing in the public mind.

There could have been historical reasons for the bewilderment about the facts of the assassination at the time of the event. As Phadke points out, a fledgling Indian state, stunned by the temerity of the assassination and still reeling under the waves of refugees coming from across a hurriedly drawn border with Pakistan, never really undertook a complete and thorough investigation into this political crime. A serious question that arises is, when there

had been five attacks on Gandhi since 1934, as painstakingly documented by Jagan Phadnis, how come the Government of India became aware of the possibility of a wider conspiracy only on 31 January 1948, after the funeral rites of Gandhi had been performed, attended by 1 million people? The Home Secretary to the Central government, R.N. Banerjee, told the Justice J.L. Kapur Commission that was when he first heard that there had been a conspiracy. Until August 1947 a foreign government was in power in Delhi, and that could be one plausible reason for this significant lapse.

It would not be out of place to mention here that the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, has been held responsible – since the 1970s by noted Indian historians like A.K. Banerjee, Bipan Chandra and Sumit Sarkar, and some of their British counterparts, who have published far more credible analyses than were available until then of the rather cynical role played by the Viceroy – for unilaterally pushing back by ten months the partition plan, earlier scheduled for June 1948. Serious questions have been raised about Mountbatten's motives in pushing back the appointed time. What were the factors behind this hurried drawing of an arbitrary line that ran through thousands of villages, deciding overnight on which side your loyalties lay? Was there a cynical British motive underlying this? Jagan Phadnis deals with this issue while debunking the simplistic and puerile argument of fanatical Hindu communalists that Gandhi was a proponent of an act that resulted in brutal communal slaughter and the largest displacement of people possibly anywhere in world history. As Phadnis aptly points out, quoting historical sources,

> he had deployed 18 thousands police for protecting one-and-a-half crore people when 25,000 police personnel were required along the Punjab border. This was the same Lord Mountbatten who had ordered 14 divisions to descend on the beach of Normandy during Second World War but he depended on 18 thousands of police personnel only, for carrying out partition of such a huge country.

Part of the sustained propaganda of the RSS, Hindu Mahasabha and other sections of the Hindu right-wing against Gandhi (and to justify the act of his assassination) has involved pinning the blame for the partition on Gandhi alone, later adding the claim that the Government of India's decision (announced on 15 January 1948) to transfer the legally assigned Rs 55 crores to Pakistan was the final straw. Phadke, Phadnis and Vaidya, through meticulous argumentation, have rebutted these widely propagated lies. When Gandhi announced his fast unto death on 13 January 1948, it was his anguished response to the unabated communal killings. The announcement of the Government of India came in the midst of his fast, on 15 January 1948. If the handing over of the legally obligatory amount to Pakistan was the reason behind his fast, why did Gandhi continue his hunger strike until 18 January 1948?

He was pained and disturbed by the Partition and could not accept that this was the price the country had to pay for independence. Moreover, he was clear that if there were in fact irreconcilable differences between the demands of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, the issue of Partition should be decided *after the British government had left India and under an Indian government.* For Mountbatten, who was acting under directions of the British government and with little knowledge of the Indian subcontinent or South Asia, to arbitrarily decide and draw the border, and announce partition earlier than planned, was deeply unacceptable to Gandhi.

For the record, though this is not the subject matter of this volume, actions of the colonial British dispensation since 1857 (the First War of Independence) that have been well documented by historians reveal the lengths to which the colonial power went, after crushing the revolt, to sow seeds of deep distrust between India's two largest religious communities, Hindus and Muslims. In vengeful and repressive acts following the Revolt of 1857, the British massacred the Muslims of Delhi, and Hindus and Muslims at many other sites of the revolt, especially in modern-day Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi believed that there was no inherent distrust between India's Hindus and Muslims, but was convinced, with his deep understanding of the Indian people, that distance and distrust had been generated and fanned to serve the interests of communalists on both sides of the religious divide. More than anything else, it has served the interests of the colonial and neo-colonial powers who have benefited financially (in particular through sale of military arms to both India and Pakistan) since the Partition.

Misrepresentation and manipulation of historical facts are an essential part of the proto-fascist project in India which, for over seven decades, has toyed with the political assassination, creating a macabre fan club around Gandhi's killer while trying to appropriate Gandhi himself. This misrepresentation and manipulation of the past decades have often centred around justification of the conspirators' carefully perpetrated killing in the name of angry, martyr-like outrage against Gandhi's principles. Gandhi stood above all for an inclusive and representative politics. This challenged – as did the strong anti-caste, Ambedkarite and Left ideologies/orientations – centuries-old caste-based discrimination and power, by asserting bonds of shared coexistence and communal harmony between all religion-based communities. While Gandhi and the entire national movement stood against British colonial domination, sectarian nationalisms as represented by the Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League and the RSS sought succour, compromise and collaboration with the British rulers. They were most threatened by this idea of composite nationhood.

Integral to this proto-fascist project, as Y.D. Phadke has effectively pointed out, is the wilful misrepresentation of Justice Khosla, who, along with Justices Atmacharan, Acchuram and Bhandare held unequivocally that both

Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte should be hanged. Pradeep Dalvi, in his play, deliberately chose to ignore the fact that the charge of plotting to assassinate Gandhi was proved beyond doubt.[18] All four judges were unanimous that the six co-conspirators were active in plotting the assassination. The purported 'courage' of Nathuram Godse as he approached the gallows has also been successfully countered in Justice Khosla's own book.[19] To quote from it:

> The fact that all seven persons (Nathuram, Apte, Karkare, Madanlal, Gopal Godse and the witness for the prosecution Digamber Badge and his servant Shankar Kistayya) had gone to Delhi before the 20th of January and some of them had travelled and stayed in hotels under assumed names, the fact that all but one of them admitted their presence at Birla House at the time of the explosion, the fact that a number of hand-grenades were taken by Badge to Bombay and were carried to Delhi, and the manner of the hasty dispersal from Delhi of all the conspirators, left very little doubt that all of them had gone to Delhi with a common object, and that their simultaneous presence in Delhi was not a mere coincidence. There was ample evidence of association after the explosion of January 20. There was, for instance, a telegram sent by Karkare who was in Bombay, to Apte in Poona, on January 25. The telegram simply said: 'BOTH COME IMMEDIATELY'. . . .[20]

Not surprisingly, Dalvi uses twisted metaphors from caste-Hindu mythology to justify Godse's actions: if Ram could kill Ravana and Krishna Kansa, why should Godse not have killed Gandhi?

The Hindu communalists regard Gandhi as evil because he stood for a united and harmonious India. Currently, a book published in Bangalore by an RSS man, titled *Gandhi Was Dharma Drohi and Desha Drohi: The Supreme Judgement*, is finding wide circulation in print and otherwise.[21] The duplicity and forked tongue of the communal proto-fascists continue to spread their message: spread hatred against Gandhi through widespread literature and 'culture' of the kind that Dalvi's plays and film represent, while seeking to appropriate Gandhi minus his essence. It is a project that can be allowed to succeed only at India's peril.

In continuation of the aim of exposing the agenda of the organizations behind Gandhi's assassination, the second volume of this dossier will bring to readers the complete Report of the Justice J.L. Kapur Commission appointed by the Government of India to probe the murder of Gandhi, with an introduction and annotations.

At least six months before he committed the murder, Nathuram Godse had been vocally expressing his desire to kill Gandhi (in public meetings and private discussions). To quote from Phadke's book:

> In October, 1964, Karkare, Madanlal and Gopal Godse finished their term

> in prison and were released. In order to celebrate this, a Satyavinayak Pooja was organized in the Udyan Hall in Pune on November 12, 1964. Here, speaking in front of 150 to 200 people, G.V. Ketkar, the then editor of the daily, *Tarun Bharat*, revealed a sensational secret. He said that three months before Gandhiji's assassination, Nathuram used to tell him [Ketkar] that he wished to kill Gandhi. Ketkar said that while discussing the possible consequences of such an act, he had asked Nathuram to consider the political and social fall-out. Ketkar also told the gathering that, personally, he was opposed to the idea of assassinating Gandhiji. After the explosion by Madanlal in the prayer meeting on 20th January, Badge returned to Pune. When Badge spoke to Ketkar about his future plans, Ketkar realized that he and his companions were going to assassinate Gandhiji.

As Ketkar was saying all this, Gopal Godse, who was sitting next to him, told him, 'Don't say anything more.' But Ketkar retorted, 'Now if I say all this they [i.e. the Congress government] are not going to arrest me.'[22]

In October 1947, Nathuram Godse had met Ketkar to request him to write an article for *Agrani*. At this meeting, Ketkar reminded Nathuram of his speech in July, and asked him if he really intended to murder Gandhiji. Nathuram replied in the affirmative. For an hour or so, Ketkar tried to dissuade him. But it was of no use. However, till he testified before the Kapur Commission, he had never mentioned in public this discussion with Nathuram. The conclusions reached in the Kapur Commission Report about Ketkar are as follows: (i) Ketkar knew in October or November 1947 that Gandhiji's life was in danger; (ii) from his conversation with Badge on 23 January 1948 or thereabouts, Ketkar knew about the conspiracy planned by Nathuram; (iii) until he met Badge, Ketkar had no idea that Badge and Apte were also involved in the conspiracy to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi. But, since Nathuram had told him in October or November 1947 that he (Nathuram) intended to assassinate Gandhi or that such a plan existed, Ketkar knew of Nathuram's complicity.[23] Despite this, till 12 November 1964, Ketkar did not reveal this in public. This has to be considered an offence on his part. There is no evidence to show that Ketkar took the lead and communicated the information he had to the Bombay government.

One thing is clear from the Report of the Kapur Commission. At least three or four months before Gandhiji started his fast to insist on the transer of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, Nathuram was voicing his intention to assassinate Gandhiji to a senior leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, G.V. Ketkar, albeit in private. This establishes that it is untrue that Nathuram decided to assassinate Gandhi because of the fast. The fast was only a minor reason for him. Phadke concludes that to say that Gandhi was 'the Victim of Fifty-Five Crores' is only to advance an argument in support of Nathuram's criminal offence.

The Hindu Right and the Struggle for India's Freedom

It was in May 2002, two months after the genocidal carnage in Gujarat, that the first NDA regime named the Andamans airport after the Hindutva icon, V.D. Savarkar. Unlike other patriots such as Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Ashfaqullah, who refused to ask the British Raj for mercy even at the cost of their lives, Savarkar, the originator of the BJP's Hindutva ideology, had actually sought clemency while lodged in the Andamans' Cellular Jail.

In his letter asking for forgiveness, dated 14 November 1913, Savarkar described himself as a 'prodigal son' longing to return to the 'parental doors of the government'.[24] Referring to his earlier letter of clemency in 1911, Savarkar wrote:

> . . . if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails, there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we are released, the people will raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge.

He went on to add,

> Moreover, my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail, nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and, therefore, where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the government.

The RSS and its role in India's struggle for freedom is equally ignominious. As the book *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags* (1993) tells us, the RSS kept totally aloof from the many anti-British movements of the 1940s, the individual civil disobedience of 1940–41, the Quit India struggle of 1942, the Azad Hind Fauj, the 1945–46 upsurge around the INA trials and the revolt in the Bombay Navy. Like all communal organizations, including and especially Jinnah's Muslim League, the RSS grew following the communal holocaust of 1946–47 ushered in after Jinnah's call for 'direct action'. The Calcutta killings of August 1946, which drove Gandhi to despair and his fast at the age of 78, was described as its 'finest hour' by the RSS.

RSS and Hindu Mahasabha Opposed the Quit India Movement

Shyama Prasad Mookherjee (the founder of the BJP) was the finance minister in the Bengal government headed by a member of the Muslim League, Fazlul Huq. When Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan of 'Quit India' on 9 August 1942, Mookherjee did not think fit to resign.[25] On the contrary, he opposed the Quit India movement in Bengal and made the following proposal:

> The question is how to combat this movement (Quit India) in Bengal? The administration of the province should be carried on in such a manner that in spite of the best efforts of the Congress, this movement will fail to take root in the province. It should be possible for us, especially responsible ministers, to be able to tell the public that the freedom for which the Congress has started the movement, already belongs to the representatives of the people. In some spheres, it might be limited during the emergency. Indians have to trust the British, not for the sake of Britain, not for any advantage that the British might gain, but for the maintenance of the defence and freedom of the province itself. You, as governor, will function as the constitutional head of the province and will be guided entirely on the advice of your ministers.

It is also a historical fact that the Hindu Mahasabha was in a coalition government with the Muslim League in Sind, and the Sind Assembly passed a resolution endorsing the demand for the creation of Pakistan. Mookherjee and other Mahasabha leaders did not think fit to resign from the government. The Hindu Mahasabha president, Savarkar, mentor of L.K. Advani, issued a directive that they should stick to the government's position, continue to perform their regular duties and not resign; in fact, they went ahead and passed a resolution on 31 August 1942 asking all Mahasabhaites to remain at their jobs and oppose the Quit India movement.[26]

RSS and the Murder

It is not insignificant that it was around the time the first RSS-driven government captured power in New Delhi (NDA-I) that the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* advertised two books published by Surya Bharati Prakashan: *Gandhi Ji's Murder and After* by co-accused and brother of the assassin, Gopal Godse, and *May It Please Your Honour* by Nathuram Godse. The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha have made money by glamorizing the killer of Gandhi and claimed proud privilege for the killing. In an interview carried in the 28 January 1994 issue of *Frontline* magazine, Gopal Godse told Arvind Rajagopal how he and his brother Nathuram grew up in the RSS, and how the RSS was like family to them. When countered by the interviewer about the then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister L.K. Advani's statement that Nathuram had nothing to do with the RSS, Gopal Godse called it an act of 'cowardice'. He further clarified that it was wrong for Advani and the RSS to

disown Nathuram, when even the Hindu Mahasabha did not disown him. He added that it was in 1944, while serving as *baudh karyavah* in the RSS, that Nathuram also began doing Hindu Mahasabha work. The most shocking is Gopal Godse's comment on the fact that Gandhi died saying 'He Ram', which he construed as a fabrication by the Congress for political ends. An October 1998 interview of the then RSS chief, Rajendra Singh, published in *Outlook* magazine, titled 'Godse's intention was good but he used the wrong methods', makes the position clear. Never has there been an unequivocal condemnation by the RSS of the cold-blooded killing of Gandhi.

RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha

Disassociating from criminals acting in their name has been a typical way in which Hindutva organizations have sought to escape legal and moral culpability, whether it be on the question of deliberately stoking rumours that lead to communal violence, or the murder of Gandhi. This duplicity carries on parallel to a plethora of literary and cultural writings and expressions glorifying such hate crimes. So it has been with the assassination of the Mahatma. First, there was an attempt to deny the actions of the government in banning the RSS – and now, to destroy archival evidence. Simultaneously, there were efforts to deny the seminal links between the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha. These have been carefully documented by D.R. Goyal in his important work on the RSS. As he points out, K.B. Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS, was one of the secretaries of the Mahasabha, and Mahasabha leaders were invited to lecture on the current political situation so that the response of the RSS was generally identical with the latter's views.

In 1931, the RSS experienced a spurt in its growth. Babarao Savarkar, who had been organizing Hindu youth under the banner of the Tarun Hindu Sabha ever since his release from prison in 1922, decided to merge his organization with the RSS. As a result, there was a mushrooming of Sangh *shakhas* in the Central Provinces. Babarao was also instrumental in securing support for the RSS at Banaras. The *shakha* started by Dani and others was strengthened when he persuaded Bhaurao Damle, a renowned scholar, to become the *sangh-chalak* of Banaras. It was the Hindu Mahasabha connection that opened for the RSS new avenues to carry their activities into northern and western India. At its Delhi session, it passed a resolution commending the activities of the RSS and emphasizing the need to spread its network across the country. Bhai Parmanand had called an All-India Hindu Youth Conference (Hindu Yuvak Parishad) in Karachi. He wrote to Babarao Savarkar to bring Hedgewar to Karachi. The Mahasabha leaders in those days had started looking upon the RSS as an extension of its politics in the sphere of youth activism, and found Hedgewar to be an appropriate man for the purpose. The Karachi conference passed a resolution that 'Sangh work should be expanded all over the country'.[27]

Interestingly, Goyal records, just as the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha were coming closer, differences between the Congress and the Mahasabha were growing. By 1932, the government of the Central Provinces declared the activities of the Sangh to be communal and objectionable, and government employees were prohibited from participating in the Mahasabha's activities. In 1934, the year of the first attempt on the life of Gandhi, the Congress passed a resolution forbidding its members from joining the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. Despite some efforts made by the RSS to get Gandhi to visit the RSS camp at Wardha in December that year, Gandhi clearly remained unimpressed and sceptical even after a meeting with Hedgewar. Gandhi did not advise the Congress to revoke its resolution. Savarkar's patronage clearly helped the organization to expand, and the rising communal tensions allowed it to thrive. Goyal's detailed documentation of the relationship between the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha is a valuable reference point in this regard.

Indoctrination in the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha

To understand what indoctrination by the RSS means, this volume includes an extract from the novel *Tamas* (Darkness) by the renowned Hindi writer, Bhisham Sahni. The indoctrination, in a clear-cut proto-fascist manner, is geared towards a constant and ever-present enemy who, as this extract shows, is primarily the Muslim. The Muslim is the outsider, the barbarian, the invader; he is also 'unclean' and 'polluted'. This indoctrination, which echoes the notion of enemies of 'Hindu society' as expanded by V.D. Savarkar in his *Hindutva*,[28] is a political rendition of the original portrayed in the treatise *Manusmriti*.[29]

Twisted narratives snatched from history and collapsed in time warp the minds of young men who join the *shakha*, and who are then disciplined in a militarist and authoritarian mould. While these narratives are deeply flawed and ahistorical, and misrepresent early medieval figures such as Shivaji and Rana Pratap, they consistently and constantly point to an irrational and unquestioning worldview that sees the Vedas as the repository of all that is good and great. The relevance of the extract from Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* is borne out by the reported statements made by the Prime Minister in the recently held Indian Science Congress (2015). It was imperative, in this context, to draw attention to Sahni's prescience in this seminal work written in 1974, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1975.

The extract from *Tamas* chillingly renders how this indoctrination by the RSS, initially mental, involves the test of killing at the final stages of initiation. As the son of the president of the local committee of the organization, Ranvir follows Master Devbrat, the instructor of the gymnasium-cum-wrestling unit, to undertake his final test. He is excited, as other young men would be, at the prospect of joining the inner sanctum. As they approach the dark room

where some dead white hens lie in a corner, a sense of apprehension grows in young Ranvir's mind. Devbrat and the invisibilized Gorkha in the room proceed to ensure that the young man, first, successfully kills a hen with a knife and then squeezes the life out of it. During this macabre initiation, Ranvir is slapped when he falters and vomits in natural revulsion at the act required of him, and told, 'If you cannot kill the hen, how will you deal with the enemy?!'

Tamas generated a huge controversy when filmmaker Govind Nihalani adapted it into a teleserial for Doordarshan in 1988. Demands for a ban were selective but noisy before it was finally telecast, an episode a week at 10 pm, on the national network. Predictably, the most aggressive protests came from hardline communalists such as Pramod Navalkar of the Shiv Sena and L.K. Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Advani's comments were the most irresponsible. He has been quoted as saying that *Tamas* was a distortion of history because it depicted the RSS and Arya Samaj as 'beastly fanatics', while Muslim League members were dismissed as 'mere ruffians' and Congressmen as 'anaemic nincompoops'. The iron man of the BJP in the early 1970s, *though now overtaken by a more virile and younger avatar*, Advani also made similarly irresponsible statements against M.S. Sathyu's *Garm Hawa* when efforts were made to block the film's censorship certificate.

If *Tamas* was deemed dangerous, it was because, at its core, it portrays (and exposes) the use of hatred and violence in communal mobilization and organizations. This has been central to the RSS's ideological training. It is what allows cadres of hundreds and thousands to spill out on to streets, given any situation and at one call, be it in Delhi in 1984, Bhagalpur in 1989, Bombay in 1992–93 or Gujarat in 2002. Clearly, any cinematic portrayal of hardcore communal politics and their mobilization is anathema to the project of the Sangh and its affiliates. Advani said at the time (according to an interview given to this writer by director M.S. Sathyu) that *Garm Hawa* was 'funded by Pakistan'! That film too was deplored by the same sections of the Hindu right because it creatively portrayed the plight, dilemmas and traumas of hundreds of thousands of Indian Muslims who – against Jinnah's and the Muslim League's sectarian call for a separate Muslim nationhood – opted for Gandhi's vision of a composite Indian nationhood.

The Hindu Right and Communal Violence

As my research into communal violence has revealed, in post-independence India, virtually every officially appointed judicial commission to probe into the cause of communal riots has held the RSS and other majoritarian communal outfits as responsible and pivotal in the build-up to the explosion of violence. I had first published this investigation, 'Who Is to Blame?', as the cover story of *Communalism Combat* in March 1998, and find it fit to reproduce excerpts here. The Report of the Justice Jagmohan Reddy Commission

of Inquiry investigating the Ahmedabad riots of 1969; Report of the Justice D.P. Madon Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad of 1970; Report of the Commission of Inquiry, Tellicherry Disturbance, 1971; Justice Joseph Vithyathil, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Jamshedpur, April 1979; Justice Venugopal Commission of Inquiry into the Kanyakumari riots of 1982 (prolonged confrontation between Hindus and Christians); Justice R.C. Sinha and Shamshul Hasan's report on the Bhagalpur riots, 1989; Justice B.N. Srikrishna Commission report about the disturbances in Bombay 1992–1993; and the Justice Liberhan Commission Report appointed to interrogate the Babri Masjid demolition – all draw similar conclusions. But the lack of absorption and memory of this historiography of communal violence by institutions of law and governance – the police and the judiciary – has ensured an absence of lasting culpability on these communal outfits.

In August 2004, in an open letter to the RSS chief Sudarshan (included in this volume), former parliamentarian R.K. Anand recorded details of the RSS's involvement in riots that took place in 1948. This record – based on information given in a book by Rajeshwar Dayal, who was Home Secretary at the time[30] – reveals how trunks of lethal weapons had been gathered by the Sangh and crammed with blueprints of great professionalism and accuracy of every town and village in that vast area, prominently marking out Muslim localities and habitations. There were also detailed instructions regarding access to various locations and other matters, which amply revealed their sinister purport. These trunks were seized by the IG Police of the Western Range, B.B.L. Jaitley, and brought to the home of Rajeshwar Dayal, the seniormost bureaucrat, who immediately took the police party to the Premier's (G.B. Pant) house. There, in a closed room, Jaitley gave a full report of his discovery, backed by all the evidence contained in the steel trunks. Timely raids conducted on the premises of the RSS had brought the massive conspiracy to light. The entire plot had been concerted under the direction and supervision of the supremo of the organization himself, M.S. Golwalkar. Dayal recorded that even as Pant could not but accept this hard evidence, there was much procrastination and delay in the cabinet; finally, a 'mere letter' was written to Golwalkar, who by then (after an obvious tip-off) was nowhere to be found. Dayal concluded: 'Came January 30, 1948 when the Mahatma, that supreme apostle of peace, fell to a bullet fired by an RSS fanatic. The whole tragic episode left me sick at heart.'

It is said that Gandhi's popularity and influence across the length and breadth of the subcontinent made Pakistani women weep and break their bangles in anguish as the news of the dastardly killing spread, and prominent editorials and obituaries were published in Pakistan's newspapers. We have sourced three such editorials from *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, that appeared in the days following the assassination. In an editorial titled, 'Glorious dust',

dated 31 January 1948, the writer concludes: 'Once the Hindus and Muslims of undivided India mingled their blood, to fight for freedom under Gandhi's banner during the Khilafat days: let us hope they will now mingle their tears over his glorious dust, to retain their peaceful freedom under the independent flags of India and Pakistan.' It was none other than the iconic revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz who wrote this editorial, as also another on 2 February 1948, titled 'Long live Gandhiji!', which reads:

> But we are gratefully conscious of the fact that nothing would give greater pleasure to the soul of the illustrious dead than dispensation of justice and fair play to Indian Muslims, which he so passionately preached and for which he laid down his life. To these countless Muslims Mahatmaji would ever remain a symbol of hope and courage. Though he is dead he will live through ageless time.

'Last Hours of the Mahatma' by Stephen Murphy has been reproduced in this volume from the website mkgandhi.org, painstakingly put together by T.K. Somaiya of the Bombay Sarvodaya group.

The RSS, NDA-I and Gandhi

The organization of this volume into different sections has a rationale. Apart from the first section, devoted to the culpability of both the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha as legally seen and acted upon by independent India's first government, it is important for readers today to understand the seminal civilizational shift that occurred with the coming to power of the first RSS-supported government, i.e. NDA-I. What is critical is how a minority government led by Vajpayee had the audacity to 're-edit' the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (*CWMG*), a project conceptualized in 1956 and implemented by an exemplary advisory board of not just collecting Gandhi's writings across three continents (South Africa, India and England), but authenticating each before publishing them in three languages. The publications division of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry was responsible for the English and Hindi versions, while the Gujarati version was entrusted to the Navajivan Trust. Tridip Suhrud, now the director of the Sabarmati Ashram, writing in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 2004, pointed out why the effort at 're-editing' undertaken in 1998 was deeply flawed. He found 500 entries from the original missing from the CD-ROM version (of which about 215 were subsequently added to the printed version). There was a failure to identify sources by the new set of editors, and, worse still, the earlier editions' meticulous scholarship and authenticity has seen a pathetic drop in standards so that the volumes can no longer be a source of standard reference. Important letters by Gandhi to various colleagues, professionals and world leaders have been dropped. The article by Suhrud lists these, and ends with a demand that the catholicity of

the original volumes be restored. It was only after the defeat of the NDA-I government that the 'revised' edition of the *CWMG* was withdrawn, in 2005.

NDA-II, 2014

Within months of the NDA-II government coming to power in May 2014, this time headed by a man who began his political life as a *pracharak*, the RSS and its affiliates (including the Hindu Mahasabha) started their campaign of hero worship of Nathuram Godse. *Every time the RSS finds itself in power and control in Delhi, there are fresh efforts to inch the secular democratic republic of India closer to their unabashed dream of a Hindu rashtra.* On 15 November 2014, I wrote a three-part article exposing how the Global Hindu Foundation had written a letter urging the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to ensure that Nathuram Godse is treated as a 'national hero' who must be represented as such in Indian school textbooks.[31] The letter, completely distorting history, states that Godse 'fought for independence from the British'. It was posted on the home page of www.savetemples.org, the website of the 'Mission to Save Hinduism and Hindu Temples'. Touted as a 'Project of Global Hindu Heritage Foundation (GHHF) USA', the mission operates from the 'Save Temple Office' opened in Hyderabad city in June 2012.

It was almost a month after this determined advocacy by the GHF, on 11 December 2014, that the homegrown but NRI-fed Member of Parliament of the ruling party, Sakshi Maharaj, called Nathuram Godse a 'patriot' (reported on www.ndtv.com). Following an uproar in the Rajya Sabha, where the ruling party remains in a minority, he was forced to apologize. The Indian Parliament, once the seat of sagacious visionaries and politicians, is today littered with saffron-clad men with hatred on their lips. The same Sakshi Maharaj had a few days earlier spewed venom against *madrasas* (and, by extension, Indian Muslims), and, more recently, exhorted Hindu women to produce at least four children in the service of their faith and nation.[32]

Was the BJP MP's apology the result of a real change of heart? Or did he, like his Prime Minister and the entire family of the RSS and its affiliates, actually mean each and every word, since they are the foundational beliefs of the narrow worldview in which they have been trained? Nathuram Godse has always been a crucial embodiment of the kind of politics that public discourse in India has been happy to call the lunatic fringe. Today that fringe is the mainstream, and therein lies the real challenge to the institutions of secular, democratic India. Godse is an exemplar of the philosophy grounded in the othering of some Indians based on communal hatred. Godse's success, in their eyes and in the eyes of those who rule India today, lay in the cold-blooded elimination of Gandhi who, they believe, more than even Nehru, was the pioneer of secular politics in India.

The extreme right has always played footsie with the killer of Gandhi.

The Belgian writer Koenraad Elst, in a book published in 2001, argues that Godse was a factor in the birth of the Jana Sangh and its present-day avatar, the BJP.[33] 'The total lack of support from politicians in other parties during this ordeal (the ban on the RSS after Gandhi's assassination by Home Minister Sardar Patel) convinced the RSS rank and file of the need to start a party of their own.'

Since 1970, the RSS has tried to manipulate and falsify the circumstances around Gandhi's assassination by construing the action as anger of the so-called masses against his pro-Pakistan views. Despite the Government of India's clear-cut stand on banning the RSS within two days of the killing, as also the self-acclaimed facts by Gopal Godse, the RSS, through its mouthpiece the *Organiser*, has repeatedly tried to distance itself from Nathuram by stating that he left the RSS in 1933. *Frontline* magazine has successfully dealt with this by publishing a revealing article and interview with Gopal Godse (1996) which is also reproduced in this volume.

Within two weeks of the Sakshi Maharaj's statement hailing Nathuram Godse as a true patriot and his subsequent retraction, newspapers reported that in the middle of December 2014, activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha had performed a ceremony at Meerut in western Uttar Pradesh to construct a 'temple' dedicated to Godse, following which the administration ordered a probe into the matter. Not insignificantly, Meerut was one of the locations where brutal anti-minority violence had been unleashed in September 2013. *Hindustan Times*, in its editorial of 29 December 2014, made a significant comment:

> Celebrating Godse is to valorize a form of vigilante politics that if practised now will surely undermine India's unity and integrity. We saw in the 2007 Samjhauta Express bombings an echo of Godse's methods whereby the accused, inspired by their own understanding of India's martial traditions, took it upon themselves to bomb Pakistani nationals travelling on the train. Godse was no less a misguided fanatic than the latter; the open idolizing of him is a very damaging symbol of the shape of Right-wing politics to come. On a simpler plane, Godse killed a frail old man in cold blood and this country has no business celebrating him.

Even after political compulsions compelled the Uttar Pradesh chief of the BJP, Laxmikant Bajpai, to retract his statement on erecting Godse's bust, the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha was triumphantly unrepentant. Its national president, Chandra Prakash Kaushik, was quoted by newspapers as saying that 'unless Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Laxmikant Bajpai retracts his statement against the Godse bust, they would fight him in 2017 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh even if he contests from Pakistan, which is quite likely given

the kind of person he is'. Bajpai's father, Vaidh Sham Sundar Bajpai, was a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha until his death.

After Meerut and Sitapur, the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha went further afield and identified a site in Lucknow for a temple dedicated to Nathuram Godse. The organization (as reported by newspapers) announced its plan to conduct '*bhoomi poojan*' soon to begin construction at the site on the outskirts of Lucknow. The Mahasabha's national general secretary, Munna Kumar Sharma, was quoted as declaring:

> The temple . . . for Godse will come up at Bhaptamau in Haiderganj area of Lucknow, for which a local resident has voluntarily given the land to the Mahasabha. Our plan is to install Godse's bust at the site before January 30, which we will celebrate as 'Shaurya Diwas' to honour the 'martyr' [Godse]. . . . We plan to hold similar events that day across the country.

These actions and the controversy over the staging of Pradeep Dalvi's play make the publication of this volume even more urgently relevant.

In the Hindutva world view, the justification of killing for a purpose may justify the means. Political commentator Inder Malhotra, commenting on this in a recent television discussion, had this to say:

> What happened during a debate on the subject on a TV news channel was abominable beyond words. The Hindu Mahasabha's national general secretary, Acharya Madan, justified the Mahatma's murder by Godse. He argued that 'killing for a cause' was no crime, and that patriotic Godse had a just cause. The anchor asked him whether his unacceptable behaviour could give others the right to strangulate him. He ducked the question but went on pontificating that 'Mr Gandhi' was responsible for the death of '10 lakh Hindus'. This was the result of Partition, for which the responsibility was 'Mr Gandhi's'. The Hindu Mahasabha spokesman went on to say that, unfortunately, there was no law under which 'Mr Gandhi' could be brought to book. So Godse did what he had to.[34]

Similarly, political commentator Bharat Bhushan commented at length on the constitutionality and ethics behind the Prime Minister spending Rs 4 crores on a sandalwood-and-ghee *Rudra Abhishek* when he visited the Pashupatinath Temple as the head of the Indian state on 4 August 2014,[35] a little known detail that was also commented upon by Rajesh Ramachandran in the *Economic Times* of 29 December 2014.[36] While much was made of the Prime Minister and the government's decision to observe 25 December 2014 as 'Good Governance Day', Ramachandran says,

> There was no *iftaar* party this time at 7 RCR. PM Narendra Modi worked

> on Eid, addressing the scientists of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research on July 29. This too is high symbolism, which tells the minority community that they do not belong to the new idea of India. And also to the majority community – that they need not respect or celebrate the festivals of the minority communities. The Eid incident was not noticed widely. But the celebration of Christmas Day as Good Governance Day came as a shock. In all these 66 years after Gandhi's murder, no politician had dared praise his killer nor has the killer's organization ever sought to build temples for Godse. Vajpayee and Advani had only put up a portrait of Savarkar in Parliament's Central Hall. Now, Gandhi has been reduced to a garbage disposal scheme and Godse is the new God.

A visceral hatred for Gandhi, for his vision of a secular, democratic India and firm belief in inter-community harmony and dialogue despite the tragedies unleashed by Partition, are the benchmarks of this worldview. At the height of the current debates and controversies, the following comment, without any editorial discretion, was posted on the web portal of the IBN Live channel on Wednesday, 3 December 2014: 'Gandhi needed to be killed as he was giving a lot of money and sympathy to Muslims which they never deserved and would have used it against India. Why would someone touch a walking talking trashbags? I say just shoot them in their head so they can't breed more pests.' This wide currency to the politics of hatred is a foundational ideological principle of those who control the Indian state today. India is inching slowly but surely to a modern-day version of a Hindu Rashtra. The threat needs to be fully understood as the challenge before us is clear.

On 24 December 2014, the Indian government, now under the complete control of the RSS, awarded the Bharat Ratna to former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The day the announcement was made, some detractors of the decision circulated audio/video clips of some of his speeches on YouTube.[37] One of the speeches is chilling as it shows an enthusiastic Vajpayee exhorting supporters of the RSS–BJP combine a few days before the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. Enormous lies are uttered in the speech that tells the frenzied crowd that 'the Supreme Court has allowed the *kar seva*'.[38] The Supreme Court order, dated 28 November 1992, following an agitated application by O.P. Sharma, allowed only a 'symbolic *kar seva*' and appointed Tej Shankar as its observer. In this order, the court recorded the apprehensions of Sharma about the massive build-up of a mob at Ayodhya, which was cynically being allowed by the BJP-led state administration. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Kalyan Singh, had to even serve a token one day in jail because he failed to implement the letter and spirit of the order, and committed contempt of court. Yet the man who has been awarded the highest civilian honour by the present government, brazenly and openly exhorted the

mob, thereby distorting the letter and spirit of the order of the Supreme Court. These actions by men in constitutional positions of governance epitomize the manner in which proponents of the Hindu Rashtra propagate lies, distort history, subvert the rule of law and the Constitution – at every step.

Notes

[1] M.K. Gandhi in *Young India*, 19 September 1929, p. 305.

[2] Anil Nauriya, 'Gandhi on secular law and state', *The Hindu*, 22 October 2003, available at http://hindu.com/2003/10/22/stories/2003102200891000.htm.

[3] Anita Deihl, 'E.V. Ramasamy Naicker-Periyar', pp. 22–24; David Kent, 'Periyar', Atheist Community of Austin, available at http://www.atheist-community.org/library/articles/read.php?id=710; K. Veeramani, *Periyar on Women's Rights*, p. 14.

[4] *Swatantarya Veer Savarkar*, Maharashtra Prantiya Hindu Mahasabha, Pune, Vol. 6, p. 296.

[5] *Indian Educational Register*, Vol. 2, 1943, p. 10.

[6] Anil Nauriya, 'Gandhi on secular law and state'.

[7] Dr B.R. Ambedkar actually burned the *Manusmruti* at the Mahad Satyagraha on 24 December 1927, as a sign of Dalit emancipatory protest. In 1977, on the fiftieth anniversary of the 'cremation', Narhar Kurundkar delivered an inspired series of lectures, '*Manusmruti: Kahi Vichar*'. These were translated by Madhukar Deshpande and published by Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, in 1993, under the title *Manusmriti: Contemporary Thoughts*.

[8] From *The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi.*

[9] Ibid.

[10] As quoted by Anil Nauriya in 'Gandhi on secular law and state', in September 1946, Gandhi told a Christian missionary: 'If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern!' Gandhi's talk with Rev. Kellas of the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, on 16 August 1947, the day after Independence, was reported in the *Harijan* on 24 August: 'Gandhiji expressed the opinion that the state should undoubtedly be secular. It could never promote denominational education out of public funds. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance, so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of the land. There should be no interference with missionary effort, but no mission could enjoy the patronage of the state as it did during the foreign regime.' This understanding subsequently came to be reflected in Articles 25, 26 and 27 of the Indian Constitution. On the next day, 17 August, Gandhi elaborated the same point in his speech at Narkeldanga, which the *Harijan* reported thus: 'In the India for whose fashioning he had worked all his life every man enjoyed equality of status, whatever his religion was. The state was bound to be wholly secular. He went so far as to say that no denominational institution in it should enjoy state patronage. All subjects would thus be equal in the eye of the law.' Five days later, on 22 August 1947, Gandhi observed in a speech at Deshbandhu Park in Calcutta: 'Religion was a personal matter and if we succeeded in confining it to the personal plane, all would be well in our political life. . . . If officers of Government as well as members of the public undertook the responsibility and worked wholeheartedly for the creation of a secular state, we could build a new India that would be the glory of the world.' Speaking on Guru Nanak's birthday on 28 November 1947, Gandhi opposed any possibility of state funds being spent for the renovation of the Somnath temple. His reasoning was: 'After all, we have formed the Government for all. It is a "secular" government, that is, it is not a

theocratic government, rather, it does not belong to any particular religion. Hence it cannot spend money on the basis of communities.'

[11] www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org. Also reproduced in English in *Communalism Combat*, October 2000.

[12] First published in 1979, revised edition 2000, Radhakrishna Prakashan Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.

[13] Both letters can be read in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel Correspondence*, Vol. 6.

[14] https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/samukhya/conversations/topics/19081

[15] The CS-MOP is available at http://darpg.nic.in/darpgwebsite_cms/Document/file/CSMOP.pdf

[16] D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, Radhakrishna Prakashan Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, first published in 1979, revised edition 2000.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Khosla, *Murder of the Mahatma*, pp. 237–38.

[19] Ibid., pp. 244–45.

[20] Ibid., pp. 237–38.

[21] K.V. Seetharamaiah, *Gandhi an Enemy of the Faith: An Enemy of the Nation*, Sadhana Prakashana, 2011.

[22] *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter *Kapur Commission Report*), Part 1, p. 61.

[23] *Kapur Commission Report*, part 2, p. 358.

[24] The letter is reprinted in *Penal Settlement in Andamans*, Gazetteers Unit, Union Ministry of Education.

[25] Govind Sahai, *The Genesis of the RSS*.

[26] Ibid.

[27] D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*.

[28] Published in 1923 under the title *Essentials of Hindutva*.

[29] 'Savarkar said that Pakistan's inhuman and barbarous acts such as kidnapping and raping Indian women would not be stopped unless Pakistan was responded to tit for tat. Two years earlier, Savarkar had expressed his opinion that the liberal policy adopted by Shivaji in case of Muslim women was wrong as this cultured and humane treatment could not evoke in those fanatics the same feelings about Hindu women. They should have been given tit for tat, he observed frankly, so that they might have realized the horrors of those brutalities' (Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1966, p. 539). 'Besides the silly superstitions of the Hindus about caste-system, the various bans of exchange of food and drink, redemption of the outcastes and others of which we have already written fully, and which had done tremendously more harm than the two-pronged religio-political Muslim offensive had done, another suicidal morbidity had completely possessed the Hindu mind for a long time. This morbidity paralysed their own offensive and counter-offensive might. Far greater than the Muslims could ever attempt were the defeats inflicted on themselves by these morbid, virtuous Hindus! If a comparatively mild term is to be used for this infatuation, this mental imbalance of the Hindus, which caused disastrous losses for themselves, we have to call it a perverted sense of Hindu virtue' (ibid., p. 167). 'Having only learnt by rote the maxim to give food to the hungry and water to the thirsty is a virtue, the Hindus went on giving milk to the vile poisonous cobras and vipers. Even while the Muslim demons were demolishing Hindu temples and breaking to pieces their holiest of idols like Somnath, they never wreaked their vengeance upon those wicked Muslims, even when they had golden opportunities to do so, nor did they ever take out a single brick from the walls of Mosques, because their religious teachers and priests preached the virtue of not inflicting pain on the offenders' (ibid., p. 169).

[30] Rajeshwar Dayal, *A Life of Our Times*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 93–94.

[31] Teesta Setalvad, '"Godse is a National Hero who must be Taught about in Schools": Global Hindu Foundation to Government of India', available at: http://www.sabrang.com/news/2014/ccxclupart1Nov15.htm.

[32] Niha Masih, 'Hindu women must have at least 4 children, says BJP's Sakshi Maharaj', NDTV, 7 January 2015, available at http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/hindu-women-must-have-at-least-4-children-says-bjp-s-sakshi-maharaj-645239; Lalmani Verma, 'BJP Unnao MP Sakshi Maharaj claims madrasas offering cash rewards for love jihad', *Indian Express*, 14 September 2014, available at http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/bjp-unnao-mp-sakshi-maharaj-claims-madrasas-offering-cash-rewards-for-love-jihad/

[33] Koenraad Elst, 'Godse and Gandhi', *Voice of India*, Delhi, 2001.

[34] Inder Malhotra, 'With Godse at the Centre', *Indian Express*, 31 December 2014, available at http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/with-godse-at-the-centre/99/

[35] Bharat Bhushan, 'PM as Pilgrim – or Indianness Redefined', *Business Standard*, 14 August 2014, available at http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/bharat-bhushan-pm-as-pilgrim-or-indianness-redefined-114081401189_1.html

[36] Rajesh Ramachandran, 'The New Republic: Exit Gandhi, Enter Savarkar', *Economic Times*, 29 December 2014, available at http://epaperbeta.timesofindia.com/Article.aspx?eid=31818&articlexml=ET-Polibelly-The-New-Republic-Exit-Gandhi-Enter-29122014004044.

[37] Kraft News channel, 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Provoking Speech Before Babri Masjid Demolition', video posted on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rGW7GF1qCY&list=PLoGPALnfzMPxN70JhQ4P4lvC0EzMTD7s9.

[38] Atal Bihari Vajpayee: '*Supreme Court ne jo faisla diya hai uska arth main batata hoon. Wo kar seva rokta nahi hain. Sachmuch mein Supreme Court ne hume adhikar diya hai ki hum kar seva karen. Rokne ka to sawal hi nahi. Kal kar seva kar ke Ayodhya mein sarvochya nyayalay ki kisi nirnay ki avahelana nahi hogi, kar seva kar ke sarvochya nayalaya ke nirnay ka samman kiya jayega*.' (I will tell you the meaning of the judgment given by the Supreme Court. It does not stop the *kar seva*. The Supreme Court has really given us the right to hold *kar seva*. There is no question of stopping it. Doing *kar seva* tomorrow at Ayodhya will not contravene any judgment of the Supreme Court. Doing *kar seva* will fulfil the judgment of the Supreme Court.)

Archival Truths

RSS Is Banned

Action taken by the Government of India following Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, 1948

In their resolution of February 2, 1948, the Government of India declared their determination to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name. In pursuance of this policy the Government of India have decided to declare unlawful the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in the Chief Commissioner's Provinces. Similar action is also being taken in the Governor's Provinces.

As democratic governments, the Government of India and the provincial governments have always been anxious to allow reasonable scope for genuine political, social and economic activities to all parties and organisations including those whose policies and purposes differ from, or even run counter to their own, subject to the consideration that such activities should not transgress certain commonly recognised limits of propriety or law. The professed aims and objects of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are to promote the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of the Hindus and also to foster feelings of brotherhood, love and service amongst them. Government themselves are most anxious to improve the general material and intellectual well-being of all sections of the people and have got schemes on hand which are designed to carry out these objects, particularly the provision of physical training and education in military matters to the youth of the country. Government have, however, noticed with regret that in practice members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have not adhered to their professed ideals.

Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by members of the Sangh. It has been found that in several parts of the country individual members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity, and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect firearms, to create disaffection against the government and suborn the police and the military. These activities have been carried on under a cloak of secrecy, and the government have considered from time to time how far these activities rendered it incumbent on

them to deal with the Sangh in its corporate capacity. The last occasion when the government defined this attitude was when the Premiers and the Home Ministers of provinces met in Delhi in conference towards the end of November.

It was then unanimously agreed that the stage when the Sangh should be dealt with as an association had not yet arrived and that individuals should continue to be dealt with sternly as hitherto. The objectionable and harmful activities of the Sangh have, however, continued unabated and the cult of violence sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Sangh has claimed many victims. The latest and the most precious to fall was Gandhiji himself.

In these circumstances it is the bounden duty of the government to take effective measures to curb this reappearance of violence in a virulent form and as a first step to this end, they have decided to declare the Sangh as an unlawful association. Government have no doubt that in taking this measure they have the support of all law–abiding citizens, of all those who have the welfare of the country at heart.

From the archives of the Home Ministry, Government of India, published in *Communalism Combat*, Year 11, No. 100, August 2004.

Sardar's Tight Leash on Sangh Chief

Guru Golwalkar's pledge of good conduct fails to impress government

Press note dated 14 November 1948 issued by the Home Ministry, Government of India

Soon after his release from prison in Nagpur after the statutory period of six months, Mr Golwalkar, head of the RSS organisation, made approaches to the government which indicated a possibility that the activities of that organisation might be diverted and confined to channels which would have no harmful effect on the communal situation in the country. He also expressed a desire to interview the Home Minister [Sardar Patel]. In order to enable him to do so, the Government of India requested the CP [Central Provinces] government to cancel an order issued by them under which Mr Golwalkar's movements had been restricted to the city of Nagpur and to facilitate his departure for Delhi for the specific purpose of seeing the Home Minister.

Mr Golwalkar accordingly came to Delhi and had his first interview with the Home Minister soon after his arrival. There was an exchange of views and Mr Golwalkar wanted some time to consult his followers in an attempt to influence them on the right lines. Some days later he had his second interview during which he expressed his inability to bind himself to any change until the ban was lifted. He felt that the lifting of the ban would strengthen his hands in dealing with his followers. Simultaneously, however, the Government of India had got in touch with provincial governments to acquaint themselves with their views and the latest information about the activities of the RSS. The information received by the Government of India shows that the activities carried on in various forms and ways by the people associated with the RSS tend to be anti-national and often subversive and violent and that persistent attempts are being made by the RSS to revive an atmosphere in the country which was productive of such disastrous consequences in the past. For these reasons, the provincial governments have declared themselves opposed to the withdrawal of the ban and the Government of India have concurred with the view of the provincial governments.

This position was conveyed to Mr Golwalkar towards the end of the last month and he was told that since the purpose for which he had been allowed to come to Delhi had been served, he should now return to Nagpur. Mr

Golwalkar was not prepared to accept this position and expressed a desire to see the Home Minister and the Prime Minister [Pandit Nehru] on their return to Delhi. The Home Minister declined to grant a further interview, but in order to give him a chance to interview the Prime Minister on his return, if the latter so desired, he was allowed to remain in Delhi under certain restrictive orders issued by the District Magistrate of Delhi. Mr Golwalkar declined to accept the orders of restrictions, but has made no attempts to contravene the restrictions imposed on him. He has written letters both to the Prime Minister and Home Minster explaining *inter alia* that the RSS agrees entirely in the conception of a secular state for India and that it accepts the National Flag of the country and requesting that the ban imposed on the organisation in February should now be lifted. These professions of the RSS leader are, however, quite inconsistent with the practice of his followers and for the reasons already explained above, the Government of India find themselves unable to advise provincial governments to lift the ban. The Prime Minister has, therefore, declined the interview which Mr Golwalkar had sought.

Mr Golwalkar is accordingly being informed that he should make immediate arrangements to return to Nagpur. The Government of India are also taking appropriate steps to ensure that Mr Golwalkar complies with these instructions.

From the archives of the Home Ministry, Government of India, published in *Communalism Combat*, Year 11, No. 100, August 2004.

Who do we believe – the RSS or Sardar Patel?

"All their speeches were full of communal poison. As a final result of their poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji.

RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death."

–Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, Union Home Minister, to Guru Golwalkar, RSS Chief, in a letter on September 11, 1948.

But Mr. Vajpayee says-

'The Sangh is my SOUL'.

COMMUNALISM COMBAT

HATE HURTS, HARMONY WORKS

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Advertisement published in *Communalism Combat*, Year 11, No. 100, August 2004.

आपण कोणावर विश्वास ठेवायचा ?
आर एस एस
का
सरदार पटेलांवर ?

''त्यांची सगळी भाषणं जातीयवादाच्या विषानं भरलेली होती.
या विषाचा परिणाम अखेर असा झाला की,
देशाला गांधीजींच्या बहुमूल्य जीवनाची
किंमत मोजावी लागली.
आर एस एसच्या लोकांनी गांधीजींच्या निधनानंतर
आनंद व्यक्त केला आणि मिठाई वाटली.''

-केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री सरदार वल्लभभाई पटेल यांनी आर एस एस प्रमुख, गोळवलकर गुरूजींना
11 सप्टेंबर 1948 रोजी लिहिलेल्या पत्रात.

परंतू श्री वाजपेयी म्हणतात
'संघ हा माझा आत्मा आहे'.

COMMUNALISM COMBAT
HATE HURTS, HARMONY WORKS

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તમે જ કહો, કોણ વધુ વિશ્વાસપાત્ર -
આર એસ એસ
કે
સરદાર પટેલ?

**"એ લોકોનાં બધાં ભાષણોમાં કોમી ઝેર હતું.
એમના ઝેરના અંતિમ પરિણામ તરીકે દેશ ઉપર
ગાંધીજીના અમૂલ્ય જીવનનું બલિદાન આવી પડ્યું.
ગાંધીજીના મૃત્યુથી આર એસ એસ વાળાઓને બહુ
હરખ થયો અને એમણે મીઠાઈ વહેંચી."**

- કેન્દ્ર સરકારના ગૃહ પ્રધાન સરદાર વલ્લભભાઈ પટેલે આર એસ એસના સરસંઘચાલક ગુરુ ગોળવલકરને ૧૧મી સપ્ટેમ્બર ૧૯૪૮ના રોજ લખેલા પત્રમાંથી.

પરંતુ વાજપેયીજી કહે છે કે
'સંઘ મારો આત્મા છે'

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کون ہے سچا
آر ایس ایس
یا
سردار پٹیل

ان کی ساری تقریر میں فرقے واریت کے زہر سے بھری تھیں۔
اسی زہر کا اثر تھا کہ دیش کو گاندھی جی کی
زندگی کی قربانی کا غم اٹھانا پڑا۔
آر ایس ایس والوں نے گاندھی جی کے قتل پر خوشیاں منائیں اور مٹھائی بانٹیں۔

(11 ستمبر 1948 - سردار ولبھ بھائی پٹیل، مرکزی وزیر داخلہ، آر ایس ایس کے سربراہ
گرو گولوالکر کے نام ایک خط میں)

لیکن واجپائی جی کہتے ہیں
"سنگھ میری آتما ہے"

COMMUNALISM COMBAT
HATE HURTS. HARMONY WORKS

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Attempts to Destroy Documents and Rewrite History

RTI Application and Analysis of Destruction of Home Ministry Files

VENKATESH NAYAK

No. RTI/GOI/MHA/2014/4 Date: 18/07/2014

From,
Venkatesh Nayak
B-117, 2nd Floor
Sarvodaya Enclave
New Delhi- 110 017

To,
The Central Public Information Officer
Ministry of Home Affairs
Government of India
North Block
New Delhi- 110 001

Dear sir,

Sub: Request for information under the *Right to Information Act, 2005*

Apropos of the statement made by the Hon'ble Minister for Home Affairs on the floor of the Rajya Sabha on 11/07/2014 which was telecast across the country I would like to obtain the following information:

1) A clear photocopy of the list containing the subject matter of each of the 11,100 files and records that were weeded out/destroyed by your Ministry along with a clear indication of their categorization- such as Category A', 'B' and C" accorded to them prior to such destruction;

2) The number of the Officer(s) of your Ministry along with their designations who authorised the clearing of the said files and papers (names are not required);

3) The designation(s) of the representative(s) of the National Archives that were present at the time of weeding out of the said files as required under para #113 of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (names are not required);

4) A clear photocopy of the half-yearly report of the records weeded out during the latest clearing exercise, prepared by your Ministry for submission to the Director General Archives, as per Rule 9(4) of the *Public Records Rules, 1997*;

5) The exact number and subject matter of files originally classified: "top secret", "secret" and "confidential" that were declassified and deposited with the Director General, National Archives of India under Rule 7(3) of the *Public Records Rules, 1997*, if any;

Email dated 1 September 2014, 17:39 hrs:

Dear all,

Readers may remember the furore in the Rajya Sabha on 9th July when an Hon'ble Member raised an issue of destruction of files of historical value as alleged in news reports published that day. Several members expressed their concern over this alleged files destruction. First, the Union Minister for Law and Justice denied that any file of historical importance was destroyed and the Government agreed to come out with a statement two days later. On 11th July, the Union Home Minister made a statement in the House denying that any files of historical significance were destroyed. He reported that 11,100 files containing an unspecified number of papers were destroyed between June–July, 2014 pursuant to the directions of the Prime Minister to the Secretaries of all Departments. This matter was discussed again next week on the 14th, with the Home Minister giving some more clarifications on the issue. The unofficial verbatim text of the debates for the 9th, 11th and 14th of June are accessible on the Rajya Sabha website at: http://164.100.47.5/debatenew/newshow.aspx. Please look under the records for debates during the Zero Hour on those days. I am not circulating a copy of the debates as that would amount to violation of the practice and procedure of Parliament. Only official and corrected versions of the debate may be published by any person.

Having read news reports of the debate on the destruction of a large number of files, I submitted a request for information under the *Right to Information Act, 2005* (RTI Act) asking the following information. The reply received is keyed below each query (see attachment):

1) A clear photocopy of the list containing the subject matter of each of the 11,100 files and records that were weeded out/destroyed by your Ministry along with a clear indication of their categorization – such as Category 'A', 'B' and 'C' accorded to them prior to such destruction;
Reply: *List of files which are destroyed is being compiled. This can be made available in due course on payment of requisite fee. You may write to us if so desired.*
2) The number of the Officer(s) of your Ministry along with their designations who authorised the clearing of the said files and papers (names are not required);
Reply: *A copy of letter No. NIL dated 05.06.2014 from the Cabinet Secretary is attached. Para (f) thereof refers.*
3) The designation(s) of the representative(s) of the National Archives that were present at the time of weeding out of the said files as required under para #113 of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (names are not required);
Reply: *-do- (i.e., same as above reply).*

4) A clear photocopy of the half-yearly report of the records weeded out during the latest clearing exercise, prepared by your Ministry for submission to the Director General Archives, as per Rule 9(4) of the *Public Records Rules, 1997*;
Reply: No such report has been sent to National Archives of India.
5) The exact number and subject matter of files originally classified: 'top secret', 'secret' and 'confidential' that were declassified and deposited with the Director General, National Archives of India under Rule 7(3) of the *Public Records Rules, 1997*, if any;
Reply: *Nil.*
6) The exact number and subject matter of files accorded with the security classification: 'top secret', 'secret' and 'confidential' that were weeded out, if any;
Reply: *Nil.*
7) A clear description of the manner of disposal of the records that were cleared, namely the number of files incinerated (burned) and/or shredded.
Reply: Record Retention Schedule of MHA is available on the website of MHA (Website: mha.gov.in). This list can be made available on payment of requisite fee.

What is problematic with this reply?

The Public Information Officer's reply is more vague than the Home Minister's statements in the Rajya Sabha for the following reasons:

1) **Even after more than a month of destroying the 11,100 files, the MHA does not have, in one comprehensive list, details of all files that were destroyed.** Having looked at records management practices in some detail during my decade-long career of advocating for transparency in government, I find it surprising that the MHA went about destroying files without even preparing a list of files for review, first. The Home Minister stated in the Rajya Sabha that records were weeded out in accordance with Para #113 of the Central Secretariat's Manual of Office Procedure (CS-MOP). Para #113(4) states that the Department records, room must send a list of files ripe for reviewing and destruction/archivisation in January each year in quarterly lots. **The PIO's reply that even the list of files that were weeded out has not been compiled till date indicates that the procedure for properly identifying files for weeding out was simply not followed.** The CS-MOP is available at: http://darpg.nic.in/darpgwebsite_cms/Document/file/CSMOP.pdf.

Further, Section 4(1)(a) of the RTI Act states that all public authorities including the MHA must index, catalogue, computerise and network the records they hold in custody. If the MHA's divisions did not have a preliminary list of files to be reviewed for destruction, how exactly did the weeding out

process take place? Did the 500 officers whom the Home Minister stated as being involved in the weeding out exercise, simply walked to the records rooms or the shelves where the old files were kept and started weeding them out one by one? **The refusal to give details of this process both to Parliament when the issue was debated and now when a request is made under RTI, is shocking to say the least. What worsens the case is the audacity of the PIO's reply sent more than thirty days after the request was received in the MHA that the information will be given only on payment of fees. Under the RTI Act it is simply not open to a PIO to charge any fees for giving information after thirty days. Nor can the supply of information be deferred to a date beyond thirty days.**

2) The Home Minister informed Parliament that 500 officials were involved in the weeding out exercise. No further details were given. When I asked for only the designations of such officers because officers of all grades and ranks are not permitted to authorise destruction of official records, a vague reply is given to me. Para (f) of the Cabinet Secretary's letter only states that the entire process of weeding out files must be done in accordance with rules of record keeping including digitisation within 3–4 weeks. **The PIO's reply to this query is simply not a sensible reply at all. Let alone the names, even the designations of the officers who authorised destruction of files is being denied under the RTI Act in a roundabout manner. This is not in keeping with the promise of transparency that was made when this Government took over the reins of power in Delhi. Citizen taxpayers have the right to know who authorised the destruction of files, as the salary bill for the officers' time spent on this work is footed by them.**

3) Para #113(2) of the CS-MOP requires that records that are more than twenty-five years old be reviewed for archivisation in consultation with the National Archives. **However the PIO's reply indicates that National Archives was not consulted at all during this weeding our process. So how old were the records that were weeded out is a serious question which was not satisfactorily answered either in Parliament or in response to my RTI application.**

4) Para #113(7) of the CS-MOP requires that Category 'A' and 'B' records that are not weeded out be sent to the Archives for preservation, if not required for reference within the Department. These records are meant for preservation for twenty-five years or more. However the PIO's reply indicates that no file classified 'top secret', 'secret' or 'confidential' was sent to the National Archives in June–July 2014. It is only obvious that files of shorter lifespan would also not have been sent to the Archives for preservation as they may not contain information of historical value that is worth preserving. **What then was destroyed in June–July 2014 is a mystery that neither the Home Minister's reply in the Rajya Sabha nor the PIO's reply clarifies.** The only saving grace is that no classified record (i.e., top secret, secret or confidential) was destroyed. Even there we simply have to take the MHA's word for it.

5) The PIO's reply to my query about the manner of destruction is also vague. According to the CS-MOP records may be destroyed either by shredding or burning. The answer to my query has to be 'one of the two' or 'both' depending upon the choice of mode of destruction made by the MHA. Nevertheless I looked through the MHA's website but could not find the record retention (RR) schedule anywhere on the website. **The 3–4 line explanation given under Section 4(1)(b) RTI manuals under clauses (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) is childish and shows scant respect for a law made by Parliament. These manuals have not been updated since they were first drawn up several years ago. See: http://mha.nic.in/infoundrsec** However if readers find the RR schedule on the MHA's website, kindly alert me and I will reconsider my views on this subject.

The Hon'ble Home Minister and his senior officers have a lot of 'homework' to do if they are to truly deliver on the Hon'ble Prime Minister's promise of increased transparency in the Central Government's actions and greater accountability to the people of India. This kind of transparency cannot be accomplished through Twitter or Facebook or other social media. What is required to be done is something akin to what Norway has done with its offcial records. See http:oep.no. The meta data about all files generated and held by public authorities is published online. A request under their RTI law may be made for any of these documents through this website. If a requested document is not covered by any exemption, it is emailed to the requestor within a week. I have received some official documents in this manner when I tested out this facility. India has a lot of work to do if it wants to join the groups of nations that practise the transparency they preach.

Obituary

It is with great sadness that I learnt about the passing on of Mr. Balraj Puri, noted journalist and crusader for human rights in India. He was a founder member of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information. He was a dear friend and mentor. At a conference to discuss RTI which I helped organise in Jammu and Kashmir a few years ago, he gave invaluable advice to the policymakers to revise the old RTI law and make its practices and procedures similar to the Central RTI Act. His contribution to the cause of human rights and peace in J&K will always be remembered with great respect. This email alert is dedicated to his memory.

Kindly circulate this email widely.
Thanks.

Venkatesh Nayak
Programme Coordinator, Access to Information Programme
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
B-117, 1st Floor, Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi 110 017

Scholars' and Artists' Petition against Cabinet Decision to Destroy Files Relating to Gandhi's Assassination

PURUSHOTTAM AGRAWAL (Petition Organizer)

Provide clarification on reported destruction of files and documents of historical nature, including those related to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

To:
Government of India

We, the undersigned scholars and students of Indian history and other concerned citizens and friends of India, insist that the Government of India immediately clarify its position regarding the reported destruction of 150,000 files and documents of historical nature, reportedly including documents chronicling events immediately following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, by its Ministry of Home Affairs.

The appended news reports contain worrying information that these priceless historical documents may not have been preserved in digital or any other format prior to destruction ostensibly on account of 'cleaning up government offices', and the silence of officials and ministers of the Government on a matter which is of critical importance to the preservation of history causes in us deep disquiet.

We demand of the Government of India and its Ministry of Home Affairs to provide a full and prompt reply to the Right to Information request filed by Purushottam Agrawal, scholar and a former Member of India's Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), on July 3, 2014 asking:

1. As per the recent newspaper reports, is it true that a large number of files and documents pertaining to Ministry of Home Affairs have been destroyed in the last few weeks, i.e. after May 20th 2014?
2. Were these files and documents destroyed as per the extant Record Retention Schedules of Government of India?
3. Have the important files and documents been identified and retained?
4. Have the important files of permanent nature been retained in digital form or any other form?
5. Please inform where have the important files and documents of permanent nature been sent.
6. Have these files and documents been sent to National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and other libraries?
7. In case, the information contained in these important files and documents is to be retrieved in future for study and research purposes, where should one go?

8. Please provide a copy of the order and file noting *vide* which the instruction for destroying records was issued to the officials of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Relevant news reports:
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Following-PM-Modis-directive-home-ministry-destroys-1-5-lakh-files/articleshow/37093548.cms
http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/standpoint-why-historians-feel-the-destruction-of-15-lakh-government-files-is-akin-to-the-taliban-destruction-of-the-bamiyan-buddha-statues-1998173

Signed by:
S.H. Raza, painter, New Delhi
Shyam Benegal, film-maker, Mumbai
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak , Columbia University, New York
Romila Thapar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Sheldon Pollock, Columbia University, New York
Ashok Vajpayee, poet, New Delhi
Dipesh Chakrabarty, University of Chicago
Purushottam Agrawal, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
Gyanendra Pandey, Emory University, Atlanta
Sudipta Kaviraj, Columbia University, New York
Partha Chatterjee, Columbia University, New York
Gyan Prakash, Princeton University
Frank Conlon, University of Washington
Vasudha Dalmia, University of California, Berkeley
Francis Robinson, Royal Holloway, University of London
Lawrence Cohen, University of California, Berkeley
Laurie Patton, Duke University
Raka Ray, University of California, Berkeley
David Lorenzon, El Colegio de México
Gopal Guru, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Thomas Blom Hansen, Stanford University
Ania Loomba, University of Pennsylvania
Suvir Kaul, University of Pennsylvania
Zoya Hasan, Jawaharlal Nehru University (retired)
Om Thanvi, Editor, *Jansatta*, New Delhi
Swati Chattopadhyay, University of California, Santa Barbara
V.N. Rao, Emory University
Harjot Singh Oberoi, University of British Columbia
Bishnupriya Ghosh, University of California, Santa Barbara
David Hardiman, University of Warwick

Balveer Arora, Jawaharlal Nehru University (retired)
Dilip Simeon, New Delhi
Jairus Banaji, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
Nirmalangshu Mukherji, University of Delhi
Rammanohar Reddy, Editor, *Economic and Political Weekly*
Sudhir Chandra, Institute of Advanced Studies, Nantes
Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences
Juan Cole, University of Michigan
Sumit Guha, University of Texas, Austin
Bhanu Bharti, Theatre Director
Geraldine Forbes, State University of New York, Oswego
Teesta Setalvad, Citizens for Justice and Peace, Mumbai
Javed Anand, Citizens for Justice and Peace, Mumbai
Mrinalini Sinha, University of Michigan
Anand Teltumbde, Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights
Aloka Parashar Sen, University of Hyderabad
Kumar Ketkar, Chief Editor, *Dainik Divya Marathi*
John S. Hawley, Barnard College, Columbia University
Philip Lutdgendorf, University of Iowa
Linda Hess, Stanford University
Francesca Orsini, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
Tulsi Ram, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Janaki Nair, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Ruby Lal, Emory University
Akshay Bakaya, Inalco, Paris
Raza Mir, William Paterson University
Indrani Chatterjee, University of Texas, Austin
Ben Baer, Princeton University
Kamala Visweswaran, University of Texas
Geetanjali Shree, writer, New Delhi
Suman Keshari, poet, New Delhi
Ashwini Tambe, University of Maryland- College Park
Sanjay Joshi, Northern Arizona University
Ravi Kant, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
Ananya Vajpeyi, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
William Gould, University of Leeds
Andrew J. Nicholson, State University of New York at Stony Brook
Ajay Skaria, University of Minnesota
Mitra Sharafi, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Sanjam Ahluwalia, Northern Arizona University

Subho Basu, McGill University, Montreal
Anjali Arondekar, University of California, Santa Cruz
Durba Mitra, Fordham University
Hilal Ahmed, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
Hemachandran Karah, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Update (12 July 2014): We are happy to note that Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh has stated in Parliament that documents pertaining to Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Louis Mountbatten and others are safe, while admitting that 11,100 files have been destroyed between June 5 and till as late as July 8, well after the matter was takn up by newspapers and blogs. However, a properly structured response to the Right to Information request filed on this matter by Purushottam Agrawal on 3 July 2014 is still awaited.

Given the sensitivity of the matter, the potential irreversibility of action as we still don't know whether destroyed records were digitized prior to destruction, and as the Government has still not clarified which documents have been destroyed, the petition continues.

– Purushottam Agrawal

Response (dated 20 August 2014) from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to RTI query filed by Purushottam Agrawal on 3 July 2014

RTI Matter/Urgent

F. No. 12/07/2014-CPIO
Government of India
Ministry of Home Affairs
(Coordination Division)

North Block, Central Secretariat
Dated the 20th August, 2014

To

Shri Purushottam Agrawal
H/5 A, Ground Floor,
Kailash Colony,
New Delhi 110 048

Subject: Application for seeking information under RTI Act, 2005.

Sir,

Kindly refer to your online RTI application dated 03.07.2014 transferred by RTI Section of this Ministry vide their Registration No. MHOME/R/2014/61548 dated 21.07.2014 seeking information regarding destruction of files in the Ministry of Home Affairs. In this regard, the point wise reply is as under:

S No.	Information sought for	Reply
1.	As per the recent newspaper reports, is it true that a large number of files and documents pertaining to Ministry of Home Affairs have been destroyed in the last few weeks, i.e. after May 20th 2014.	Between 05.06.2014 and 8.7.2014, 11,100 files were destroyed in Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)
2.	Were these files and documents destroyed as per the extant Record Retention Schedules of Government of India?	Yes.
3.	Have the important files and documents been identified and retained?	Yes.
4.	Have the important files of permanent nature been retained in digital form or any other form?	The important files of permanent nature have not been destroyed. Such files (in physical form) continue to be in possession of the concerned Sections of MHA.
5.	Please inform where have the important files and documents of permanent nature been sent.	Important files created upto 1988 have been sent to National Archives of India (NAI).
6.	Have these files and documents been sent to National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and other libraries?	Files which are less than 25 years old are still with MHA.
7.	In case information contained in these important files and documents are to be retrieved in future for study and research purposes, where should one go and find them.	One should approach NAI.
8.	Please provide a copy of the order and file noting vide which the instruction of destroying records was issued to the officials of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.	A copy of letter No. nil dated 05.06.2014 from Cabinet Secretary is attached. Para (f) thereof refers.

2. As per the Section 19 of RTI Act, 2005, an appeal against the above decision would lie before the Appellate Authority, Shri Kumar Alok, Joint Secretary (C&PG), MHA, Room No. 188, North Block, New Delhi.

Yours faithfully,

(T. Rajendran Nair)
Under Secretary to the Government of India & CPIO

CABINET SECRETARY
NEW DELHI

June 5, 2014

Dear Secretary,

Please recall the discussions during the interaction Hon'ble Prime Minister had with all Secretaries to Government of India at Panchavati, 7 Race Course Road on 4th June, 2014 at 6.00 PM onwards.

2. The Prime Minister had stressed upon ensuring an improved work culture and work environment including hygiene and cleanliness of the work space. You are, therefore, requested to undertake the following on an urgent basis:-

a) In each Government building, work space of your department should be cleared and spruced up. Passages and stairs should be cleaned up to make it unobstructed and no office material / almirah etc. should be found in these spaces. Inside the rooms too, the files / papers etc. should be neatly stacked so that a positive work environment is created.
b) Every Department should identify and repeal at least 10 rules or processes and even archaic Acts, that are redundant and would not lead to any loss of efficiency.
c) Every Department should identify forms that are in vogue and shorten them, where possible, to one page only. (Seeking of unnecessary or irrelevant information should be discouraged).
d) Every Department should encourage use of ICT in submission of information and eventually universalize it.
e) Decision making layers should be reduced, to a maximum of four layers.
f) Files and papers should be weeded out in accordance with the rules of record keeping including digitization, wherever necessary. This exercise should be completed within 3 – 4 weeks.
g) Collaborative decision making and frequent consultation between departments must be done. Where issues remain unresolved, Cabinet Secretariat / PMO should be apprised for resolution.
h) Effective and timely resolution of public grievances must be ensured and monitored by the Secretaries of the Departments concerned.
i) Each Department should workout modalities of fulfilling promises made to the people. we are already doing it
j) Entire Department should work as a team with every level should be encouraged to provide inputs and value addition in the exercise. Already done
k) Goals set for the period 2009-2014, and the present status thereof, should be analysed. [This information should also be included in the presentation to be made before the Hon'ble Prime Minister].

3. I expect you to act upon these immediately and indicate a plan of action latest by Monday, the 9th June 2014. Interim progress on these points will be reviewed and monitored by me in meetings to be taken with Groups of Secretaries beginning 9th June 2014. A first Action Taken Report in respect of sprucing up the work space / building should reach me by 6th June 2014 positively, so that Hon'ble Prime Minister can also be apprised. A detailed report on achievements under each of the items should also be included in your monthly d.o. letter for the month of June 2014.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Ajit Seth)

Mrs. Sneh Lata Kumar
Secretary,
Deptt. of Border Management
New Delhi

'Re-editing' Gandhi's *Collected Works*

TRIDIP SUHRUD

Gandhiji had a unique capability of attracting men and women of great talent and commitment towards him and his cause. Maganlal Gandhi, Henry Polak, Herman Kallenbach, Imam Saheb Abdul Kadar Bavazir, Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal, Swami Anand, Vinoba, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Kishorlal Mashruwala, Narhari Parikh, Miraben and many others like them were men and women of exceptional virtues. They were thinkers and servants of the people. Gandhiji was fortunate during his lifetime, and even after his assassination there were individuals and institutions ready to commit themselves to the preservation and propagation of his legacy.

It was a similar impulse that guided the project to compile all of Gandhiji's writings and make them available to readers. The project, which was conceptualized in February 1956, came to be known as the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (*CWMG*). The government of India decided to create an advisory board and vested all control and direction of the project in the board. Morarji Desai was the chairman of the board. At various points several individuals worked as members of the board. These included Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Devdas Gandhi, Pyarelal, Maganbhai Desai, G. Ramachandran, Shriman Narian, Jivanji P. Desai, P.M. Lad, R.R. Diwakar, Ramdhari Sinha 'Dinkar' and Shantilal Shah. From 1956 to 1959, Bhartan Kumarappa and Jairamdas Doulatram worked as the chief editor of the project. In February 1960, K. Swaminathan – a man who was equally comfortable with the European literary and philosophical tradition, Sanskrit poetics and Tamil literature as well as the ashram of Ramana Maharshi – was appointed chief editor. He continued to work on the *CWMG* project till his eyesight began to fail him in his early nineties. A project that was conceived in 1956 was closed in 1994 with the publication of the 100th volume. Men such as U.R. Rao, R.K. Prabhu and C.N. Patel assisted Swaminathan.

The task before the *CWMG* editorial team was not easy. Gandhiji's writings were spread over three countries – South Africa, India and England. They were in government files, in offices of newspapers, with thousands of

individuals who corresponded with him and in the diaries of his companions like Mahadev Desai. Gandhiji wrote mainly in three languages, English, Gujarati and Hindi. The *CWMG* team decided to bring out these volumes at least in these three languages. The work on the Gujarati version, called *Gandhiji No Akshardeh*, was entrusted to the Navajivan Trust, and the publications division of the Ministry of information and Broadcasting, was responsible for the English and Hindi versions. Each document had to be verified and authenticated. Gandhiji's associates, H.S.L. Polak and Chhaganlal Gandhi were called in to verify and authenticate South African papers. The government, like other institutions, participated in the process of acquiring new material. The government, for example, acquired a substantial part of the Gandhiji–Herman Kallenbach correspondence at an auction in South Africa in the early 1990s. They tell a story of an abiding friendship.

The editors and the advisory board decided on three guiding principles: (a) the aim of the series would be to reproduce Gandhiji's actual words, (b) reports of his speeches, interviews and conversation in indirect speech would be included when they were proved to be authentic beyond doubt, and (c) later research was likely to lead to the discovery of more material – the Gandhi–Kallenbach correspondence – and all such new material would be published as supplementary volumes. Of the 100 volumes, 1–90 reproduced Gandhiji's writings, speeches, letters, interviews, and notes in chronological order; volumes 91–97 were the so-called supplementary volumes which dealt with material that had become available later, while volumes 98–100 contained index of subjects, index of persons and a volume containing prefaces to the set. The *CWMG* has long since come to be recognized as one of the finest examples of editorial and translation work undertaken anywhere in the world. At least two generations of Gandhi scholars have expressed their deep indebtedness to these self-effacing men. Except for a fine biographical sketch by Ramachandra Guha it is very difficult to find any recent assessment of K. Swaminathan, of C.N. Patel, there is nothing of consequence to be found in English. But the *CWMG* endured.

Until recently, that is. In 1998, the publications dvision decided to 're-edit' the *CWMG*. The exercise was aimed at bringing uniformity, strict chronology and authenticity. Uniformity meant that all volumes ought to be of the same size – of 500 pages each! Chronology required that all the material of the supplementary volumes be incorporated at its appropriate chronological order. The publisher's note in the revised edition of 2001 has this to say about authenticity: 'The objective of the series is to reproduce Gandhiji's actual words as far as possible; reports of his speeches, interviews, conversations *which did not seem to be authentic have been avoided, as also reports of his statements in indirect form*' (emphasis added). The exercise thus involved a process of re-authentication and therefore subsequent deletion of material 'which did

not seem authentic'. It also involved a process of realigning the material from supplementary volumes. The exercise, which began in 1998, resulted in the publication of a revised edition of 100 volumes of *CWMG*, in English and Hindi. A CD-ROM version was also published.

The entire exercise is deeply flawed. We are not informed who the chief editor of this set is, the editorial team and advisory board remains a mystery. What, if any, were the measures adopted to ascertain the authenticity of material that has been omitted? We are not even given a listing of the material that has been thus found inauthentic and deleted.

A group of individuals and independent scholars in Gujarat have been examining the revised print edition and the CD-ROM. Our exercise is yet ongoing, but the findings are deeply disturbing. There are about 500 entries missing from the CD-ROM version, but they must not all be inauthentic. Of these, about 215 entries have been subsequently added to the revised print edition. There are about 300 entries missing from the print edition. Thus, we now have three versions of the *CWMG*: the original, the revised edition of 2001 in print, and the CD-ROM version. The individual prefaces of the original set became irrelevant in the process of restructuring the data. The revised edition as well as the CD have omitted all the prefaces and even the independent volume of prefaces has been excluded in the revised edition. In the original set, each volume contained a list of sources and acknowledgements specific to that particular volume. The new editors failed to even identify the sources for each volume. Instead, they have taken the list of sources of the original set, combined them and printed as one consolidated list that occupies 42 pages in each volume. Thus, 4200 pages of data that is largely meaningless to a reader have been added. The indices have been similarly mauled. The original had 4,000 main entries and 9,000 subentries for the volumes of indices. In the revised edition, a significantly large number of sub-entries are missing thus making 'action' a verb and robbing it of all its philosophical significance. Vinoba Bhave and 'Bhave, Vinoba' are different individuals for the editors. Many key entries have been reduced in size.

The work is incapable of becoming a standard reference. Let us take the supplementary volumes. One of the main aims of the exercise was to bring chronological uniformity to the set. It therefore required subsequently acquired material to be incorporated as per date and year. The table gives a summary of missing entries from volumes 91–97, the supplementary volumes of the original *CWMG*.

The table demonstrates that even the exercise of rescheduling has been done with an ineptitude, inefficiency and callousness that is shocking. Are we to assume that these letters – many of which are housed in the national archives, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the collection of the *CWMG* itself – are now found to be inauthentic? We do not know if the

Table: *List of Missing Items*

Number	*Vol. No. (old)*	*Vol. No. (revised)*	*Sr. No. as per Old Vols*	*Date*	*Description*
1	97	10	2	1909	Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi
2	97	26	addenda 3	March 17, 1922	Letter to Mazharul Haq
3	97	26	45	March 18, 1922	Letter to Prabhudas Gandhi
4	97	26	46	April 2, 1923	Letter to Kashi Gandhi
5	97	26	47	April 8, 1923	Letter to Narandas Gandhi
6	97	56	209	August, 28, 1932	Letter to Nirmala Gandhi
7	97	80	330	April 22, 1941	Letter to Prabhudas Gandhi
8	97	80	331	May 23, 1941	Letter to Prabhudas Gandhi
9	91	21	addenda 14	November 18, 1920	Letter to Narhari D Parikh
10	91	21	addenda 15	November 18, 1920	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
11	91	22	addenda 16	February 26, 1921	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
12	91	27	addenda 21	April 8, 1924	Letter to Manilal Doctor
13	91	30	addenda 23	February 21, 1925	Letter to Rameshwardas Birla
14	91	32	addenda 25	August 14, 1925	Letter to G.D. Birla
15	91	36	addenda 29	After October 10, 1926	A Talk
16	91	37	addenda 30	1926	Letter to Haribhau Upadhyaya
17	91	38	addenda 31	January 24, 1927	Letter to Mridula Sarabhai
18	91	42	addenda 38	Before August 1, 1928	A Letter
19	91	6	50	On or after February 25, 1907	Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi
20	91	6	51	February 10, 1907	Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi
21	91	6	52	February 20, 1907	Letter to P.S. to Governor, Transvaal
22	91	6	53	March 1, 1907	Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi
23	91	19	230	March 23, 1920	Telegram to Mathurdas Trikumji
24	91	23	269	Before June 30, 1921	Letter to Kunvarji Anandaji Kapadia
25	91	26	306	March 6, 1922	Letter to S.A. Brelvi
26	91	26	308	After March 21, 1922	Letter to Baba Lakshmandas
27	91	26	309	Before August 24, 1923	A Note
28	91	27	310	February 28, 1924	Message to Romain Rolland
29	91	27	311	March 4, 1924	Letter to C. Vijayaraghavachariar
30	91	27	312	March 12, 1924	Telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru
31	91	27	313	On or after March 13, 1924	Letter to Ramdas Gandhi
32	91	27	314	March 17, 1924	Letter to Ramdas Gandhi

(contd.)

Number	*Vol. No. (old)*	*Vol. No. (revised)*	*Sr. No. as per Old Vols*	*Date*	*Description*
33	91	27	315	March 24, 1924	Letter to Mahadev Desai
34	91	27	316	March 25, 1924	Letter to Radha Gandhi
35	91	38	554	January 23, 1927	Letter to Ramkrishna Chandiwala
36	91	38	555	January 24, 1927	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
37	91	38	556	January 31, 1927	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
38	91	38	557	February 3, 1927	Letter to Motiram Shaukiram Adwani
39	91	38	558	February 6, 1927	Letter to Motilal Roy
40	91	38	559	February 7, 1927	Message to International Congress against imperialism
41	91	40	614	After November 25, 1927	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
42	93	74	332	October 10, 1938	Letter to Mathurdas Trikumji
43	93	74	333	October 13, 1938	Letter to Pyarelal
44	93	74	374	January 21, 1939	Letter to Mathurdas Trikumji
45	95	26	43	March 5, 1922	Letter to the Editor, *The Survey*, New York
46	95	26	44	December 1922	A Letter (Presumably to Madan Mohan Malaviya)
47	95	27	45	March 31, 1924	A Silence Day Note
48	95	27	46	Before April 3, 1924	Letter to Anasuyaben Sarabhai
49	95	32	53	August 21, 1925	Letter to C. Ramalinga Reddy
50	95	32	54	On or before August 31, 1925	Letter to Haribhau Upadhyaya
51	95	32	55	After September 23, 1925	Fragment of a letter
52	95	35	63	May 12, 1926	Letter to Amy Jacques Garvey
53	95	38	70	Before January 10, 1927	Letter to Vasumati Pandit
54	95	38	71	January 10, 1927	Letter to Vasumati Pandit
55	95	38	72	After February 2, 1927	Letter to Vasumati Pandit
56	95	38	73	After February 2, 1927	Letter to Vasumati Pandit
57	95	43	90	December 18, 1928	Letter to Benarsidas Chaturvedi
58	95	45	94	March 23, 1929	Letter to Prabhavati
59	95	80	154	May 14, 1941	Letter to Venkataswami Naidu
60	95	84	163	August 27, 1944	Telegram to M.A. Jinnah
61	96	4	1	July 3, 1905	Letter to Millie Graham Polak

(contd.)

Number	*Vol. No. (old)*	*Vol. No. (revised)*	*Sr. No. as per Old Vols*	*Date*	*Description*
62	96	9	2	September 19, 1908	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
63	96	9	3	February 9, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
64	96	9	4	April 5, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
65	96	9	5	June 19, 1909	Draft Will and Testament
66	96	9	6	June 21, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
67	96	9	7	June 22, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
68	96	9	8	June 23, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
69	96	9	9	July 3, 1909	A Letter
70	96	9	10	July 3, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
71	96	9	11	July 7, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
72	96	9	12	July 17, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
73	96	9	13	July 21, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
74	96	9	14	July 30, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
75	96	10	15	August 7, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
76	96	10	16	August 12, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
77	96	10	17	August 20, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
78	96	10	18	August 28, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
79	96	10	19	August 30, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
80	96	10	20	September 10, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
81	96	10	21	September 17, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
82	96	10	22	September 24, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
83	97	10	23	October 1, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
84	97	10	24	October 27, 1909	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
85	97	10	25	November 14, 1909	Letter to Millie Graham Polak
86	97	10	26	November 15, 1909	Letter to H.S.L. Polak
87	97	22	286	January 22, 1921	Letter to H.S.L. Polak
88	97	23	287	April 10, 1921	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
89	97	24	290	September 29, 1921	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
90	97	72	311	December 28, 1937	Telegram to Herman Kallenbach
91	97	74	319	January 20, 1939	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
92	97	75	320	February 5, 1939	Letter to H.S.L. Polak
93	97	75	321	March 2, 1939	Telegram to Amrit Kaur
94	97	75	322	March 8, 1939	Letter to Herman Kallenbach
95	97	75	323	March/April 1939	Notes to Herman Kallenbach
96	97	75	324	March/ April 1939	Note to Herman Kallenbach
97	97	81	327	August 30, 1941	Letter to H.S.L. Polak

entries have been re-edited in the sense of providing a new 'improved' translation, improving Gandhiji's writings. One chance evidence shows that such an exercise might have been attempted. Following are two excerpts of a letter to G.D. Birla, which was written in Hindi, a comparison of the two shows that linguistic changes might have also been attempted.

> Bhaishri Ghanshyamdasji,
> God has given me mentors. I consider you as one of them. Many of my children, many sisters and elderly people such as you and Jamnalalji want to see in me perfection. Knowing this how could I be distressed by your letter. I want you always thus to caution me. You have three complaints: (i) that I absolve the Swaraj Party of the charge of corruption; (ii) that I gave a certificate to Suhrawardy; and (iii) that I have been trying to make Sarojini Devi the president. In the first place, it is a man's duty to hold fast to truth as he sees it after due striving, even if it should appear a mistake to the world. He cannot become fearless otherwise. I desire nothing so much as moksha. But I would shun even moksha if it went against truth and non-violence (*CWMG*, Vol. 91, pp. 525–26).

> Dear Shri Ghanshyamdas,
> God has provided me with conscience-keepers. You, I think, are one of them. Some of my own children, some ladies and a few grown-ups like Jamnalalji and yourself want to make me a perfect man. Regarding you thus, how could I be offended by your letter? In fact, I want you always to caution me in this manner. You complain against three things: One, my absolving the Swaraj Party of the charge of corruption; two, my giving a testimonial to Suhrawardy; and, three, my trying to get Sarojini Devi elected as [Congress] president. In the first place, it is one's duty to say only that which, after a painstaking inquiry, one has come to regard as the truth, even if the world considers it to be an error. In no other way can one become fearless. I cannot consider anything dearer to me than moksha. Yet even that moksha I would renounce if it were to conflict with truth and non-violence (*CWMG*, E-book, Vol. 29, p. 29).

If this is any indication, it proves that the exercise has been not just of re-arranging and deleting but also of re-editing the textual matter.

Such callousness to a work of archival nature cannot be tolerated by any individual committed to academic and intellectual integrity. It is our demand that the revised edition, including the CD-ROM, be recalled and scrapped, the original *CWMG* be reinstated as the only and the most authentic version of the writings and utterances of Gandhiji. The government must take statutory steps to ensure that no attempt to re-edit or recast the *CWMG* is made even in future.

First published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20 November 2004, pp. 4967–69.

Rebutting the RSS Story

The Murderer as Martyr: Gandhi or Godse?

CHUNIBHAI VAIDYA

The article reproduced below was first published as a pamphlet in Gujarati, in response to two controversial plays, Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye *and* Gandhi virudh Gandhi. *The pamphlet has since been translated into seven Indian languages. The English version has been put out on the website, mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org.*

The killer of Gandhiji and his apologists sought to justify the assassination on the following arguments:

- Gandhiji supported the idea of a separate state for Muslims. In a sense he was responsible for the creation of Pakistan.
- In spite of the Pakistani aggression in Kashmir, Gandhiji fasted to compel the government of India to release an amount of Rs 55 crore due to Pakistan.
- The belligerence of Muslims was a result of Gandhiji's policy of appeasement.

Scrutinised in the light of recorded history these prove to be clever distortions to misguide the gullible. Gandhiji in those days was very active in the rough and tumble of politics. The proposal for partition of the country and violent reaction against it generated tensions which ultimately resulted in sectarian killings on a scale unprecedented in human history.

For the ethnic Muslims, Gandhiji was a Hindu leader who opposed creation of Pakistan on sectarian grounds. Ethnic Hindus looked upon him as an impediment to their plan to avenge the atrocities on Hindus. Godse was a child of this extremist thinking.

The assassination of Gandhiji was a culmination of decades of systematic brainwashing. Gandhiji had become a thorn in the flesh of the hardcore Hindus and in course of time this resentment turned into a phobia. Beginning with the year 1934 and over a period of fourteen years, on as many as six occasions, attempts were made to kill Gandhiji. The last one by Godse on January 30, 1948 was successful. The remaining five were made in 1934, in

the months of July and September 1944, September 1946 and 20th January 1948. Godse was involved in two previous attempts.

When the unsuccessful attempts of 1934, 1944 and 1946 were made, the proposal regarding partition and the matter regarding release of Rs 55 crore to Pakistan were not in existence at all. The conspiracy to do away with Gandhiji was conceived much earlier than the successful accomplishment thereof. The grounds advanced for this heinous crime are clever rationalisation to hoodwink the gullible. The staging of the play entitled *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* is clear proof of the fact that the mindset that led to Gandhiji's assassination has not disappeared from our national life.

A civil society is wedded to the democratic method of resolving differences through frank and open debate and evolving a working consensus. Gandhiji was always open to persuasion. Gandhiji had invited Godse for discussions but the latter did not avail of this opportunity given to him. This is indicative of the lack of faith in the democratic way of resolving differences on the part of Godse and his ilk. Such a fascist mindset seeks to do away with dissent by liquidating the opponents.

The Hindu backlash was as much responsible for the creation of Pakistan as the sentiments of ethnic Muslims. The hardcore Hindus looked down upon the Muslims as misguided *malechcha* (unclean) and came to believe that coexistence with them was not possible. Mutual distrust and recriminations led the extremists among both the groups to regard Hindus and Muslims as different nationalities and this strengthened the Muslim League's demand for partition as the only possible solution to the communal problem. Vested interests on both the sides stirred up the separatist sentiment and sought to justify their hate-campaign by clever and selective distortion of history. It is indeed a matter for serious concern for the nation that this mentality has not disappeared even today.

The Poet Mohammed Iqbal who wrote the famous song '*Sare jahan se achcha Hindostan hamara*' was the first to formulate the concept of a separate state for Muslims as early as 1930. Needless to state, this sentiment was, in a sense, strengthened by Hindu extremists. In 1937, at the open session of the Hindu Mahasabha held at Ahmedabad, Veer Savarkar, in his presidential address asserted: 'India cannot be assumed today to be unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main – the Hindus and the Muslims.' (*Vide Writings of Swatantarya Veer Savarkar*, vol. 6 page 296, Maharashtra Prantiya Hindu Mahasabha, Pune). In 1945, he had stated: 'I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory. We, the Hindus are a nation by ourselves, and it is a historical fact that the Hindus and the Muslims are two nations.' (*Vide Indian Educational Register*, 1943, vol. 2, page 10) It was this sentiment of separate and irreconcilable identities of the followers of these religions that led to the formation of Pakistan.

In complete contrast to this mentality, throughout his life Gandhiji remained an uncompromising advocate of the oneness of God, respect for all religions, equality of all men and non-violence in thought, speech and action. His daily prayers comprised verses, devotional songs and readings from different scriptures. All people, irrespective of their allegiance to different religions, attended those meetings. Till his dying day, Gandhiji held the view that the nationality of fellow citizens was not in any way affected by the fact of their subscribing to religious belief other than yours. During his life, on more than one occasion he strove for unity and equality among Hindus themselves, as well as amity among Hindus and Muslims, even risking his life. The idea of partition was an anathema to him. He was given to saying that he would sooner die than subscribe to such a pernicious doctrine. His life was an open book and no substantiation is necessary on this score.

Under Gandhiji's leadership communal amity occupied the pride of place in the constructive programmes of the Congress. Muslim leaders and intellectuals of national stature, like Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Azad, Dr [Hayatullah] Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Badruddin Tayabji, even Jinnah himself, were in the Congress fold. It is natural that the Congress opposed the proposal for the division of the country. But as a result of the incitement on the part of the lumpen elements among the Hindus and Muslims a tidal wave of carnage and lawlessness engulfed the nation.

Faced with the breakdown of law and order in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, the North-West Frontier Province and Bengal, Congress lost nerve. Jinnah adopted an inflexible attitude. Lord Mountbatten being motivated by the time-limit given to him by the British Cabinet used all his powers of persuasion and charm to steer all the leaders to a solution quick and yet acceptable to all; but the adamantine attitude of Jinnah made everything except partition unacceptable.

Faced with such a scenario Congress found it difficult to keep up its morale. Gandhiji conveyed to Lord Mountbatten on April 5, 1947 that he would agree even if the Britishers made Jinnah the Prime Minister and left the country as it was. Instead, Lord Mountbatten succeeded in getting the Congress to agree to partition.

Gandhiji was in the dark about it; he was shell-shocked when he learned about it. The only remedy available to him was fasting unto death to dissuade his followers from acquiescence to a ruinous course of action. After sustained soul searching he came to the conclusion that in the prevalent situation such a step on his part would further deteriorate the situation, demoralise the Congress and the whole country.

The factors that weighed with him were the importunate demands of a rapidly changing national scenario and the non-existence of an alternate set of leaders of proven nationalist credentials.

The most perplexing and yet pertinent question is that Jinnah was the most vocal protagonist of Pakistan and with the intentional or otherwise efforts of Mountbatten he succeeded in carving it out. Then, instead of making the two his targets, why did Godse select one for murder who vehemently opposed the idea of partition till the resolution by the Congress accepting the partition of the country was passed on June 3, 1947 and Pakistan became a *fait accompli*? Is it that, as Savarkar put it, he had no quarrel with Jinnah and his two-nation theory but he and his apologists had a real quarrel with Gandhi and Gandhi alone?

It is necessary to point out an aspect of Gandhiji's personality that made him the source of unabated distrust and dislike in the eyes of hardcore Hindus. Though he was a devout Hindu, Gandhiji had most amicable and warm relations with many who did not belong to the Hindu fold. As a result of this exposure he had developed an eclectic religious sense based on oneness of God and equality of all religions. Caste divisions and untouchability prevalent among the Hindus distressed him immensely. He advocated and actively encouraged inter-caste marriages. Lastly, he blessed only those marriages wherein one of the partners belonged to the untouchable castes.

Vested interests amongst high-caste Hindus viewed this reformist and other religious programmes with bitter resentment. In course of time it developed into a phobia and thus he became an anathema to them.

The matter regarding release of Rs 55 crore to Pakistan towards the second instalment of arrears to be paid to it, under the terms of division of assets and liabilities, requires to be understood in the context of the events that took place in the aftermath of partition. Of the Rs 75 crore to be paid, the first instalment of Rs 20 crore was already released. The invasion of Kashmir by self-styled liberators with the covert support of the Pakistani army took place before the second instalment was paid.

While the government of India decided to withhold it, Lord Mountbatten was of the opinion that it amounted to a violation of the mutually agreed conditions and he brought it to the notice of Gandhiji. To Gandhiji's ethical sense the policy of tit for tat was repugnant and he readily agreed with the Viceroy's point of view. However, linking his stand in this matter with the fast he undertook, as we will see in the following lines, is an intentional mix-up and distortion of facts of contemporary history.

The fast was undertaken with a view to restoring communal amity in Delhi. Gandhiji arrived from Calcutta in September 1947 to go to Punjab to restore peace there. On being briefed by Sardar Patel about the explosive situation in Delhi itself, he changed his plans and decided to continue his stay in Delhi to restore peace with the firm determination to 'Do or Die'.

The influx of Hindus from Pakistan who were uprooted and who had suffered killings of relatives, abduction and rape of women and looting of

their belongings had created an explosive situation. Local Hindus who were outraged by the treatment meted out to their Hindu brethren and the anger of local Muslims against reports of similar outrages on their co-religionists in India made Delhi a veritable witches' cauldron.

This resulted in killings, molestation, torching of houses and properties. This caused deep anguish to Gandhiji. What added poignancy to this was the realisation that it happened in India itself just after an unique incident in the history of mankind: doing away of the shackles of a colonial regime by non-violent means.

It was with this background in his mind that he undertook a fast unto death to restore communal amity and sanity in Delhi. And, as if to allow the critics of Mahatma Gandhi a chance to mix-up and manoeuvre, the decision of the government of India to release Rs 55 crore to Pakistan came during this period of his fast.

The following facts dissolve the much-touted thesis that Gandhiji had fasted to bring moral pressure on government of India to relent:

- Dr Sushila Nair, as soon as she heard Gandhiji proclaim his decision, rushed to her brother Pyarelal and informed him in a huff that Gandhiji had decided to fast till the madness in Delhi ceased. Even in those moments of inadvertence, the mention of 55 crore of rupees was not made which clearly proves that it was not intended by Gandhiji.
- Gandhiji's own announcement about his resolve in the evening prayer meeting on 12th January did not contain any reference to it. Had it been a condition, he would have certainly mentioned it as that.
- Similarly, there was no reference to it in his discourse on 13th January.
- Gandhiji's reply on 15th January to a specific question regarding the purpose of his fast did not mention it.
- The press release of the government of India did not have any mention thereof.
- The list of assurances given by the committee headed by Dr Rajendra Prasad to persuade Gandhiji to give up his fast did not include it.

We hope these facts would put the Rs 55 crore concoction at rest. With regard to the last allegation regarding appeasement of Muslims, it should be conceded that a certain amount of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims existed in the nation. The colonial power cleverly exploited it during its reign and inevitably the division of the country came into being. Long before Gandhiji appeared on the national stage sagacious leaders like B.G. Tilak had started attempts to secure the participation of Muslims in the nationalist struggle.

Under what came to be known as the Lucknow Pact, Lokmanya Tilak, Annie Besant and Mohammed Ali Jinnah evolved a formula under which the Muslims would get representation greater than what would be justified on the basis of the percentage of Muslim population. The frank and bold statement of

Tilak defending the Pact is an eloquent refutation of the charge that Gandhiji began the policy of appeasement of Muslims.

The author of the play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye*, Pradeep Dalvi, described the order of the Maharashtra government banning the staging of the play as an attack on freedom of expression. This is a travesty of truth and a perversion of the fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution.

The Constitution also provides for ban on the abuse of this freedom; *vide* its section 19(2). The implications of what Dalvi and his ilk profess requires to be carefully analysed. Under the guise of defending the freedom of expression, what they are seeking to do is to advocate the right to murder those who do not agree with them. They seek to spread hatred and violence. They want to propagate the pernicious doctrine that under certain circumstances the murder of the opponent becomes an act of religious sacrifice.

It is revolting to find that the heinous murder of one who was a living embodiment of non-violence, peace and love and who was as defenceless as a naked, new-born child should be made a scaffolding for a neo-fascist doctrine.

Godse is no more but the mindset that gave birth to such distorted philosophy is unfortunately still with us. One can dismiss what he did as an act of a lunatic bigot. Assassination by itself is not as wicked as the attempts to rationalise, justify, masquerade it as a religious act. Permitting such plays to be staged amounts to permitting mis-education of our children. Only a sane response to such insidious propaganda is unequivocal rejection thereof.

From *Communalism Combat*, October 2000. The author is associated with the Gujarat Lok Samiti, Ahmedabad.

The Murderer as Martyr

The Glorification of Gandhiji's Murderers is consistent with the Criminalization of Indian Politics today

Y.D. PHADKE

The article reproduced below is extracted from historian Y.D. Phadke's *book in Marathi,* Nathuramayan, *which exposes Pradeep Dalvi's claim about his play,* Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye, *being based on historical facts as completely bogus.* Nathuramayan *is a compilation of a series of incisive articles by Phadke, first published in the Marathi evening newspaper,* Apla Mahanagar. *It has been translated into English by Mukta Rajadhyaksha.*

There have been unprecedented developments over Pradeep Dalvi's book and unhistorical play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* (I am Nathuram Godse Speaking). A decade ago, experts of the Maharashtra State Drama Scrutiny Board had ruled that the play was unsuitable for staging. Taking into account the change of power in 1995 and the resulting political situation (the Shiv Sena–BJP coalition's rise to power), Dalvi took his play out of cold storage and nothing objectionable was found this time.

Vipul Bhargav had produced the Gujarati version of this play, *Gandhi ke Godse?* long back. The play had had about 60–70 shows on the Gujarati stage without any protest or demonstration from any political party. One reason for this was the change in the political atmosphere in Gujarat, even before a change of power in Maharashtra.

But after the play opened on the Marathi stage, there was uproar in Parliament. A show of the play in Marathi was to be staged at Shivaji Mandir, Dadar, on July 17, 1998 and some Congress workers were to protest against the show. MPs in both houses of Parliament belonging to the Congress party asked for a ban on the play. Union Home Minister L.K. Advani openly recommended that the Maharashtra government should ban Dalvi's play and the Shiv Sena–BJP coalition had to accept the advice.

The play could not be staged at the Shivaji Mandir on July 17. On July 18, Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi announced a ban on the play, both in Marathi and Gujarati, on the ground that it posed a threat to the law and order situation in the state.

When contacted for my reaction to the play, I had told journalists that I had not read the script and my health did not permit me to go and watch the play. But since my stand has always been that no book, play, film, television serial or any work of art should be banned, I reiterated it.

Subsequent to the ban, Dalvi's interviews started appearing in some newspapers, wherein he claimed that the play is based on facts and that everything in the play is documented. Pradeep Dalvi is not known to me. But some of my friends obtained for me a copy of his play in Marathi, as well its Gujarati translation.

On reading the scripts, I realised that the play was based on two books written by Gopal Godse – *Gandhi hatya ani mee* and *Panchavanna Kotinche Bali*. I was aware that Godse's books were not based on truth. (Gopal Godse, the brother of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram, was convicted for being part of the conspiracy to kill Gandhi.) I wrote a series of articles exposing the lacunae in Dalvi's script.

There is now a trend to believe that Nathuram was not a murderer, but a patriotic martyr. Over the last 15–20 years, criminals have started playing a role in politics and some of the criminals have become legislators, members of Parliament, ministers and even Chief Ministers. In such a situation it is inevitable that the villain becomes the hero and the murderer becomes the martyr. An old martyr, who fought unarmed for the freedom of the nation, is branded as an anti-national.

It takes time to rewrite history. The common man prefers to watch films, television serials and plays rather than read boring books of history. People believe this to be true. Public memory being short, the producers of plays, films and television serials take advantage of this. Besides, the controversy over Dalvi's play gave it free publicity.

In Dalvi's play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye*, there is a portrayal of a police officer named Sawant. While investigating whether this characterisation was completely imaginary or based on reality, I discovered that an 84-year-old retired police officer, Narayanrao Sawant, lives in Mumbai. Right from arresting [Narayan] Apte and [Vishnu] Karkare, to the trial at the Red Fort in Delhi and the judgment on the appeal at Simla, Sawant was involved with the Gandhi assassination case as an inquiry officer.

Though I am much younger than he is and though we were not acquainted, he graciously came over to my place at my request due to my ill-health. He answered my doubts and helped me immensely. I will never forget his visit and our discussion that went on for two or three hours.

In an interview to the MP, Pritish Nandy, Dalvi insisted that he respects Gandhi. He says that of the six scenes in his play, Gandhi is present in three while Nathuram is portrayed in the remaining three. He claimed that since he has equal respect for the assassin, Nathuram Godse, and for Mahatma

Gandhi, who was killed by Godse's gun, he has given equal weightage (i.e., fifty per cent) to both in his play. He claims that he has not been unfair to either Gandhi or Godse.

In the handwritten script that was available to me, in three of the scenes, Mahatma Gandhi is seen in only one, while in the remaining two, Gandhi's fourth and youngest son, Devdas Gandhi and Nathuram, the hero of the play, are in conversation. Two pages of the script are reserved for Mahatma Gandhi and four for Devdas Gandhi. Thus, a total of six pages have been devoted for the Gandhi father and son duo in Dalvi's twenty-two-page script. In the interview he gave to Nandy, explaining how complete balance between the two characters has been achieved, Dalvi said: 'Actually, in the play Nathuram says that it might be possible for him to finish Gandhi, but impossible to destroy Gandhism.' But in the script of the play that I saw, Nathuram never says anything of the kind.

In fact, Nathuram wrote in a letter that 'Gandhiji is immortal, but Gandhism is on its deathbed.' From this, it is evident that Godse not only felt that he had killed Gandhi, the man, but also believed, even as he was about to be hanged, that Gandhism was on its deathbed and would die soon. Why then did Dalvi lie to Nandy that the Nathuram in his play says that he might be able to finish Gandhi, but never destroy Gandhism?

In *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye*, we see three police officers portrayed – Arjundas, Sheikh and Sawant. The script maintains that Arjundas came to meet Gandhi at about 5 pm on January 30, 1948.

In his book, *Gandhi hatya ani mee* (My role in Gandhi's assassination), Gopal Godse has narrated how Arjundas, the chief official of Ambala jail, comforted him (Gopal Godse) after the hanging of Nathuram Godse and Apte. (12th edition, page 237, 1995). Where then did Dalvi get the information that Arjundas was Nehru's bodyguard and Nehru had sent him for Gandhiji's security?

In the documented proof presented to the Justice Jeevanlal Kapur Commission and the testimony of witnesses, it is clear that no police officer of IGP (Inspector General of Police) rank came to meet Mahatma Gandhi at about 5 p.m. on 30th January.

Besides the mythical IGP, Arjundas, there are the characters of two other police officers, Sheikh and Sawant, in the play. I found no proof that any officer with these names was present in the police station on Delhi's Parliament Street on January 30, 1948. In fact, Justice Kapur has noted in his report (Part 1, page 223) that even after Madanlal (another conspirator) was arrested in Delhi on January 20, 1948, the Bombay police had still not dispatched plain-clothed officers to find the Marathi-speaking accused who were camping in Delhi under different names.

An informal, high-level meeting took place at Sardar Patel's residence

on 31st January after Gandhiji's funeral rites had been carried out. The central home secretary R.N. Banerjee heard for the first time in this meeting that there had been a conspiracy to assassinate Gandhi. After the responsibility for the inquiry on this conspiracy had been given to the Bombay Police, Jamshed (Jimmy) Nagarwala and the other police officers assisting him started their investigation in Delhi from February 1948.

The trial started in the Red Fort on May 27, 1948. Gangadhar Indurkar says in his autobiography: 'We journalists were given special entrance passes . . . Many police officers from Bombay were there along with local police officers. When I was at Thane there had been a sub-inspector at Kurla named Sawant whom I knew. I met him here.' ('*Ulatleli Paane*', 1948, page 129).

Who exactly was this Sawant? In the list of witnesses given at the end of the Kapur Commission Report, there are two police officers listed with the name Sawant – No. 57 (N.B. Sawant) and No. 94 (S.N. Sawant). Both Sawants appeared before the Commission in New Delhi. N.B. Sawant appeared on 25.1.1968 and S.N. Sawant on 25.1.1969, a full year later. To my knowledge, S.N. Sawant or Shankarrao Sawant is no more, while N.B. Sawant or Narayanrao Sawant is 84 years old and lives in Mumbai.

After I received this information, I spoke to him (Narayanrao) over the phone. On July 29, 1998, he came to my place and related how he had caught Nana Apte, another accused in the Gandhi assassination case in Apollo Hotel behind Regal Cinema in Mumbai.

In Manohar Malgaonkar's book, *The Men who killed Gandhi*, he writes that after the main accused were arrested, Jamshed Nagarwala was appointed as the special investigation officer in Delhi on February 17, 1948. Narayanrao Sawant was among the officers who assisted Nagarwala. Till the verdict in the Red Fort trial was given, Narayanrao was present in the Red Fort. After the appeal was heard in front of the bench of the Punjab High Court, the accused were put in jail at Ambala, the case was over and there was no need for him to camp in Ambala. Hence he returned to Mumbai without going to Ambala. Does this mean that:

- Dalvi relied totally on his imagination to create the characters Sheikh and Sawant in the play or did he trust some unreliable information he had heard and allowed his creativity as a playwright to take wing?
- What was the motive behind his inventing Sheikh and Sawant to play the role of police officers in his play?
- Narayanrao Sawant told me that he had never worked with a police inspector named Sheikh in Delhi. Then what exactly did Dalvi achieve by writing that on 30th January1948, the statement of Nathuram who killed Gandhiji was noted by Sheikh in the presence of Sawant in the police station on Parliament Street?

  In *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* there are two scenes where Gandhi's

fourth and youngest son, Devdas, is shown in conversation with Nathuram. On the night of January 30, 1948, after Nathuram had fired at Gandhiji and killed him, he is handcuffed and brought to the police station on Delhi's Parliament Street. Devdas telephones Sheikh, the officer at the police station, indicates his desire to meet Nathuram and comes there to talk to him. This happens in the first scene of the second act.

From Gopal Godse's narration of this incident, we gather that as Nathuram was pacing up and down behind bars, he saw Devdas Gandhi at the police station. Recognising him, he reminded him that they had recently come together at a press conference. In answer to Devdas' query, 'And now you . . .'

On the basis of what he had heard, Gopal Godse says that if Devdas Gandhi felt any disgust for the man who had ended his father's life, he set it aside for a moment, also set aside the sorrow he felt at his father's death if only for a while and asked Nathuram: 'Then why did you do this?'

'The problem is political and nothing but political,' said Nathuram. 'Will you give me half-an-hour and listen to what I say?' At the request of the officer-in-charge, Devdas Gandhi terminated this two or three minute conversation and left. After this fleeting meeting described by Gopal Godse, there is no other available proof of Devdas Gandhi meeting Nathuram.

However, in his script, where the meeting between the two is almost cordial, Dalvi even puts in a suggestion for the director, Vinay Apte – Devdas Gandhi shakes hands with Nathuram before he leaves. Did Lalita Bapat, a member of the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board and the audience that clapped during the performance see nothing objectionable in this?

While describing this meeting, even Gopal Godse has not claimed that after his conversation with Nathuram, who was behind bars, Devdas shook hands with him before leaving the police station.

A scene that shows Devdas Gandhi on the night 30th January, shaking hands with his father's assassin, Nathuram, is more suited to a melodrama in masala commercial Hindi film. Should one assume that Devdas shook hands to express joy at meeting Nathuram, who had carried out the 'holy deed' of killing his (Devdas Gandhi's) father? Or, did he want to congratulate Nathuram for his patriotism that led him to assassinate Gandhiji? In the circumstances, is it wrong if people feel that the playwright has glorified a murderer and distorted history and that the director and producer have lent support to this act?

According to Dalvi's script, Devdas Gandhi got another opportunity to meet Nathuram on November 15, 1949, eight days before he (Nathuram) was to be hanged. In this scene, Devdas Gandhi enters with the Home Ministry's writ of permission and asks the jailer of Ambala Jail: 'Where is Nathuram? Can I go to his prison cell?' When they meet, Nathuram asks Devdas, like one would ask a close friend whom one was seeing after a long time: 'So you found the time (to meet me) after two years?'

In this scene, Dalvi has let his imagination run riot. In reality, neither Devdas Gandhi nor Ramdas Gandhi were law graduates, nor did they practice law. Devdas was the editor of the daily newspaper *The Hindustan Times* for twenty-five years. And Ramdasbhai held a job in Nagpur. But Dalvi's Devdas Gandhi wants to represent Nathuram and that too in order to challenge the death-by-hanging verdict given unanimously by three judges of the Punjab High Court.

At the time, the new Constitution of the Indian Republic had not yet been approved by the Constituent Assembly and hence no Supreme Court existed. In such a situation, all Devdas Gandhi could have done was to appeal to Governor–General Rajgopalachari on behalf of Nathuram to ask for a pardon and stop the hanging. Does playwright Dalvi imagine that since the Governor–General was Devdas Gandhi's father-in-law, he would have acceded to the request his son-in-law made on behalf of Nathuram?

But Nathuram, the hero of Dalvi's play, is all too eager to embrace death. This brave soldier asks Devdas, 'If you wanted to represent someone, why didn't you do so for Tatyarao Savarkar? Or Nana Apte? Why didn't you choose to defend those innocent persons?'

This scene of the last meeting between Devdas Gandhi and Nathuram Godse is entirely imaginary. There's not an iota of proof to support it. On May 1, 1949, Ramdas Gandhi had written to the Governor–General that the death sentence given to Nathuram by the Special Court of Justice Atmacharan should not be carried out. (But Devdas Gandhi had absolutely nothing to do with this.)

In Dalvi's script that I saw, Nathuram tells Devdas Gandhi, 'Just as Gandhi is your father, he is the father of my nation . . . in fact he was great. There's no need at all for me to accept or deny this truth. The fearless war he waged against apartheid deserves our respect. It's praiseworthy how, after returning to India (from South Africa) and entering politics, he travelled all over the countryside to get to see and know the real India. Then, at the Congress session, his firm announcement from the dais to Jinnah–Nehru–Patel that lawyers from Bombay and Delhi cannot represent the nation was an act of courage. The salt struggle, the Dandi March, the Quit India Movement, the burning of foreign cloth . . . all these turned me into his devotee. When Gandhi was arrested the slogan, "The saint of Sabarmati is in jail", was on my lips too.'

Nathuram Godse never ever called Gandhiji the 'The Father of the Nation'. Dalvi's Nathuram does so. This can be interpreted in two ways: either the playwright is unfair to Nathuram or he is glorifying Nathuram. I, at least, have never read anywhere that either of the Godse brothers, Nathuram or Gopal, had ever said or written that they were devotees of Gandhiji. How, then, did Gopal Godse tolerate Dalvi's dishonour to Nathuram by portraying him as a devotee of Gandhi?

Nathuram Godse was no devotee of Gandhi. If he was devoted to anyone, it was to Swatantraveer (V.D.) Savarkar.

While reading the script of *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye*, I could recognise Nathuram in it sometimes and Gopal Godse at other times. I never saw Nana Apte's face peeping from behind Nathuram's mask. But I did sometimes feel that Dalvi the playwright had donned Nathuram's mask and was delivering his dialogue. However all seem unanimous about the view that Gandhiji never uttered the words 'He Ram!' in his last moments.

On January 29, 1948, Gandhiji suffered from a bout of coughing which just wouldn't cease. He said then that his cough would not get better with penicillin tablets but only by chanting the name of Ram and praying to him. He told the attendant who was giving him a massage: 'If someone were to end my life by pumping a bullet through me – as someone tried to do with a bomb the other day – and I met his bullet without a groan, and breathed my last taking God's name, then alone would I have made good my claim.' (Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, volume 2, page 766)

On the evening of January 30, 1948 when Nathuram appeared before Gandhiji with folded hands that carried a pistol, Gandhiji remained unmoved despite seeing the very messenger of death in front of him. The possibility of the words 'Hey Ram!' coming out of the lips of such a courageous believer in God is stronger than Nathuram's contention.

Even if Nathuram had told Gandhiji, 'Mara, Mara' ('Die, Die' – phonetically the reverse of 'Rama, Rama'), Gandhi must have said 'Ram, Ram!' and bid goodbye to Nathuram and to the world.

Sheikh, the police inspector in Dalvi's play, becomes an admirer of Nathuram. He sees how cool and distant Nathuram remains despite his sentence of death by hanging and tells him, 'You penetrate the bones and flesh, the blood of a human being like a virus. I can't get you out of my system. I have never been interested in politics. I did my job honestly. I don't know if assassinating Gandhi was right or wrong but in spite of that I feel disgust for him today. If he hadn't existed, you would never have killed him. I hate Gandhi. I hate Pakistan. I hate Jinnah and I hate you, Nathuram.'

Dalvi's Sheikh tells Nathuram that his daughter Zubeida puts flowers on the place where Nathuram sits in the box for the accused in court. The idea of honouring the main accused in a murder case may be innovative, but there is absolutely no possibility of it having happened inside a court in 1948.

Dalvi's Sheikh also tells Nathuram that Zubeida worships him (Nathuram). He says, 'My daughter Zubeida . . . goes to the *masjid* every day to seek blessings for you. She finds it difficult to walk now but she goes somehow. She pays her obeisance. She is pregnant.'

Inspired by this sisterly affection, Dalvi's Nathuram gives Sheikh a message for Zubeida: 'If you really love this brother of yours, look after the baby

in your womb. You will give birth to a son. Teach him my value. If another Gandhi is created on this soil, this country will need another Nathuram. We want Nathuram. Another Nathuram.' Whose words are these? Nathuram's or Pradeep Dalvi's? Is this wishful thinking from the playwright?

In his book, *The Story of the Trial in the Red Fort* (1948–1949; 1976, page 129), P.L. Inamdar, who represented Dr Parchure, one of the accused in the Gandhi assassination case, there is a description of how advocate Dange who appeared for another accused, Nana Apte, praised his (Apte's) love affair while defending his client. Manorama Salve, the lover of the married Apte, was the daughter of a police officer from Mumbai who happened to be a Christian. The police had already tapped her telephone unknown to her lover, Apte. Advocate Dange told the court how Apte sang, 'Tere Islam ka Banda', over the telephone and got caught by the police.

Perhaps inspired by this incident, Dalvi found place in his play for a police inspector, Sheikh, and his daughter, Zubeida. If he had written a play about Nana Apte and included the characters of Manorama Salve and her father, no historian would have objected. But since the play was about Nathuram, Dalvi probably wanted to add some spice and show the affection between a unique brother–sister pair. So he changed the religion of his characters and pulled in the Muslim father–daughter pair of Sheikh and Zubeida.

Let us now discuss the Gujarati play, *Gandhi ke Godse?*, which was performed before *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoye* came on stage.

From an article by Shirish Latkar in the Marathi daily, *Tarun Bharat*, (June 10, 1998), we learn that even before the first performance of the Marathi play took place, Dalvi kept telling everyone that *Gandhi ke Godse?* was not an adaptation from his (Dalvi's) original Marathi play but a word-to-word translation.

Latkar quotes Dalvi thus: 'He (the producer of the Gujarati play did an exact translation of the play into Gujarati and sent it to the censors with the name *Aahuti*. And the funny part is that the same committee which turned down *Mee Nathuram* . . . immediately approved the Gujarati *Aahuti*. That too without any deletions at all.'

I read the Gujarati script and compared it to the Marathi one. The second act of the Gujarati script is not an exact translation but much of the contents are similar. But the first act of the Gujarati script is quite different from the Marathi version.

Along with Nathuram's mother, Karkare, Madanlal, Digambar Badge and Gopal Godse are all present in the Gujarati play. After the bomb explosion at Gandhiji's prayer meeting on January 20, 1948 and after the police arrested Madanlal, the audience sees the trio of Karkare, Nathuram and Apte on a platform at the Delhi railway station, planning and plotting how to reach Gandhiji and kill him before the police arrested them.

In Nathuram's opinion, Gandhi is responsible for the sorry state and alcoholism of his own eldest son, Harilal. Apart from Apte and Badge, in no scene in the Marathi play do we see Madanlal or Gopal Godse speaking to Nathuram.

Nathuram tried unsuccessfully to tell the court that he was the sole person who planned and executed the assassination of Gandhi and that nobody else had a hand in it.

Neither the special judge Atmacharan nor the three judges of the Punjab High Court's bench – Acchruram, Bhandari and Gopaldas Khosla – accepted this. G.D. (Gopaldas) Khosla had actually seen tears in the eyes of the women present in court and the men too groping for their handkerchiefs while the hearing on Nathuram's appeal was on in Simla. Khosla himself was a renowned writer. In 1963, his book, *The Murder of the Mahatma*, was published.

Gopal Godse has quoted this convenient bit from it of how Nathuram's statement impressed listeners in the court in his (Gopal Godse's) book, *Panchavanna Kotinche Bali* (The Victim of Fifty-Five Crores) under the sub-heading, 'Innocent'. The sub-heading deliberately misleads those who have not read Khosla's original book written in English. The truth is that Justice Khosla was unanimous with Justices Atmacharan, Acchruram and Bhandari that Nathuram and Apte should be hanged.

But, in his play, while glorifying his hero, Dalvi has not heeded the historical truth that the charge of having plotted Gandhi's assassination was proved in court.

When Dalvi's character Sheikh is recording Nathuram's statement in the police station, he asks Nathuram: 'But in the conspiracy . . .?' Nathuram stops him and says, 'Excuse me, Mr Sheikh, you are insulting my intelligence. Can't I plan and execute a righteous killing (Nathuram uses the word *vadh* in an attempt to provide sanctity to his action; it is demons and villains who get killed in this "righteous" way) on my own?' Dalvi's Nathuram doesn't even mention the word 'conspiracy' and even about 30th January, he firmly says that the plan and execution were all his.

Even if worshippers of the Godse brothers today feel that Nathuram and Gopal were incarnations of the ancient King Harishchandra of Ayodhya who was renowned for his truthfulness, it is obvious that they told a downright lie in court in order to prevent the conspiracy from being proved.

The defence lawyers (appearing for the accused) argued that the bomb explosion by Madanlal at Gandhiji's prayer meeting on January 20 and his assassination by Nathuram on January 30 were unrelated incidents and individual acts carried out by Madanlal and Nathuram. Contrary to this, the stand on the government's behalf was that these actions were part of the overall conspiracy and this was proved in court with evidence.

Along with the main accused Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte, Karkare, Madanlal and Gopal Godse first absolutely denied (the 'conspiracy') but later admitted that it did take place. Justice Khosla writes on the subject: 'The fact that all seven persons (Nathuram, Apte, Karkare, Madanlal, Gopal Godse and the witness for the prosecution Digamber Badge and his servant Shankar Kistayya) had gone to Delhi before the 20th of January and some of them had travelled and stayed in hotels under assumed names; the fact that all but one of them admitted their presence at Birla House at the time of the explosion; the fact that a number of hand-grenades were taken by Badge to Bombay and were carried to Delhi; and the manner of the hasty dispersal from Delhi of all the conspirators, left very little doubt that all of them had gone to Delhi with a common object, and that their simultaneous presence in Delhi was not a mere coincidence. There was ample evidence of association after the explosion of January 20. There was, for instance, a telegram sent by Karkare who was in Bombay, to Apte in Poona, on January 25. The telegram simply said: 'BOTH COME IMMEDIATELY' . . . (*The Murder of the Mahatma*, pages 237–238).

We cannot forget that whatever lies the accused may have told in court, the four judges were unanimous that these six were very much active in plotting Gandhi's assassination.

The strange irony of history is that after fifty years have gone by, the number of those praising Nathuram as a courageous martyr who sacrificed himself for his goal is definitely on the increase. If this weren't the case, an ordinary playwright like Dalvi would not have dared to bring him on stage as a hero. These days villains openly parade on the political stage as heroes. In independent India, politics has lately become so rapidly criminalized that a murderer becomes a martyr. And the Mahatma, who led the people's movement to free the country, is termed a traitor.

In fact, Nathuram assassinated Gandhi and even gave philosophical reasoning in his statement to the court. In it he reminded the judges and the listeners that Shri Ram and Shri Krishna had killed Ravana and Kansa respectively. It is said that before Arjuna fought with his teacher Dronacharya, he paid homage to him by throwing an arrow at him. In a bid to remind those present in court of this incident, Nathuram said that he saluted Gandhiji before he shot bullets into him. The possibility exists that Nathuram saluted Gandhiji in keeping with his conviction that villains should be paid homage first.

Nathuram also seems to have used Rana Pratap, Shivaji Maharaj and Guru Gobind Singh (Nathuram Godse, *May it please your honour*, page 62). Shri Ram, Shri Krishna, Arjun, Rana Pratap or Guru Gobind Singh all killed armed enemies. I, at least, know of no example where any of these heroes 'righteously' killed a defenceless old man. If admirers of Godse find such an example they should bring it to the notice of us illiterate souls.

In his will, made on the day before he was hanged (14.1.1949), Nathuram desired that his bones be handed down the generations but not immersed (into a river) till the Sindhu (Indus) river became a part of united Hindustan. Dalvi's Nathuram tells the audience: 'After he read my will, Tatyarao (Savarkar) said to me, "Nathuram, you are fit to be the sage Dadhichi of modern India. Like his bones, your bones too will turn into weapons."'

Since most people in the audience were probably mesmerised and lost their corporeal consciousness while seeing the first scene in Dalvi's Marathi play, they must not have realised the true situation that after his release from jail in the Red Fort on February 10, 1949, Swatantraveer Savarkar was never together with the other accused, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte, in the dark and lonely cell in Ambala Jail.

And since Savarkar was not present there when Nathuram made his will on November 14, 1949, how would he call him 'the sage Dadhichi of modern India'? I have read that many senior devotees (admirers) of Savarkar like Gopal Godse and Sudheer Phadke were present in the audience. I wonder how they could have approved of this reckless flight of Dalvi's imagination.

Dalvi's Nathuram tells the audience: 'Tatyarao was unnecessarily dragged into this trial. But should I tell you the real truth? I benefited from his arrest. How? I got to be with him. Tatyarao belonged only to us (in prison). We learnt so much from him. The last days of my life were great. They were fruitfully spent. After all, he was the conqueror of death. So even the shadow of death seemed shrunken in his company.'

Dalvi seems to have created this myth on the basis of certain statements, in Gopal Godse's book, *Gandhi Hatya Ani Mee*. After the accused in the Gandhi assassination conspiracy were arrested, they were presented in front of the District Magistrate of Bombay province. Nathuram Godse was not among them. But Gopal Godse was. When he saw Savarkar, Gopal Godse wondered, 'Will he be able to speak in his present state of mind?' Savarkar spoke a little only with Nana Apte.

P.L. Inamdar argued the case in court on behalf of Gopal Godse and Dr Dattatray Sadashiv Parchure was the defence advocate. Later, after the accused appealed against the sentence given by special judge Atmacharan, P.L. Inamdar represented Gopal Godse and Dr Parchure once again. In October 1976, *The Story of the Trial in the Red Fort* as told by Inamdar was published.

Inamdar has written: 'During this entire period of the trial in the Red Fort, I never saw Savarkar, not even once, even turning his head to look at Nathuram sitting on his left. Forget speaking to Nathuram. . . Savarkar would be sitting on his chair stone-faced like the Sphinx as though he had no idea that anyone was in the seat next to him. He used to sit there quietly, in a very disciplined manner.'

Inamdar has noted that he felt that Savarkar had decided to act thus in

order to show that he was not in any way connected to the plot of assassinating Gandhi (P.L. Inamdar, *The Story of the Trial in the Red Fort*, 1976, page 185).

Inamdar has written that during the trial period, he spoke a lot with Nathuram about Savarkar's behaviour. He notes, 'Tatyarao, with his planned and theatrical demeanour, tried to show that he had nothing to do with Nathuram, not only in the court at the Red Fort but also in a solitary spot like the prison at the Red Fort.'

It was natural that Nathuram felt 'extremely hurt' by this behaviour. Inamdar has explicitly stated that even at their last meeting in Simla, Nathuram mentioned to him (Inamdar) of how distressed he used to be and how he fretted for a touch from Tatyarao's hand, one touch of sympathy, one look of compassion. (Ibid., page 185).

Nathuram claimed that the decision to murder Gandhi was entirely his and he alone executed it on the evening of January 30, 1948. He said that no one else was involved in this act. This statement was not accepted by any of the three judges of the Punjab High Court bench. But it seems that playwright Dalvi believes that his hero Nathuram was telling the truth.

Historians consider it their duty to provide exact dates and put events in the correct order in which they happened. Even Pradeep Dalvi is putting on an act of having studied history; he is an independent commercial playwright with no controls over him.

On 13th January (1948), after Gandhiji began his fast, Nathuram is writing a new editorial about it when Nana Apte of Dalvi's play informs him about a news item he has heard over the radio: 'The Cabinet has changed its decision. They have agreed to give Rs 55 crore to Pakistan. Gandhi has stopped his fast unto death.'

The 'All India Radio' that provided Apte with this news must be extremely efficient! Isn't it a miracle that it actually informed Dalvi's Nana Apte in advance of events that happened during the next five days? Gandhiji started his fast on January 13, 1948 at five minutes to noon. On the third day of the fast, i.e. on January 15, the government of India declared its decision of handing over to Pakistan its share of Rs 55 crore from the cash balance immediately. Yet Gandhiji did not withdraw his fast since its second objective was to establish peace between Hindus and Muslims in Delhi.

On January 18, after the All-Party Peace Committee had given an assurance in writing and all the representatives, including those of the Hindu Sabha in Delhi and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had signed the assurance, Gandhiji accepted a glass of orange juice from Maulana Azad and terminated his feet at 12.45 pm (Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, volume 2, 1958, pages 705–731).

These dates and chain of events have been accepted by Justice Atmacha-

ran and the three judges of the Punjab High Court who gave their judgement on the appeal of the accused and the Kapur Commission.

While giving his statement in court, Nathuram was committing two crimes (offences) – suppressing the truth and telling lies. His contention was that the explosion brought about by Madanlal Pahwa using a guncotton slab during Gandhiji's prayer meeting on 20.1.1948 and Gandhiji's assassination by Nathuram himself on 30.1.1948 were two separate incidents, absolutely unrelated to each other.

It is on record that in the very first paragraph of his statement, he (Nathuram) has said that, in fact, the very act of law-giving was tainted since the government filed only one case due to its belief that these two incidents were part of one conspiracy when it should actually have filed two separate cases. We must understand that the court did not think he was telling the truth.

What Nathuram said in his statement in court – that the decision to assassinate Gandhi was his alone, that he did not conspire with anyone, that there was no 'conspiracy', that he was not at all connected with the bomb explosion on January 20 and that when he made the final decision on January 30 he didn't mention it to anybody – were all barefaced lies.

While talking about the fifth accusation in the chargesheet which stated that Nathuram had conspired with Madanlal in the attempt to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi, Nathuram said, 'I wish to make it clear that in this case I was not associated with Madanlal or anyone else in any way whatsoever'. (Gopal Godse, *Panchavanna Kotiche Bali*). 'As far as I know, on January 20th, Gopal wasn't even in Delhi.' (Ibid., page 69).

'Apte and I had planned to carry out fierce but peaceful demonstrations as soon as possible before Gandhiji in his prayer meeting.' (Ibid., page 68) When Nathuram states that it was 'only for this that the two of them had come to Delhi', he was telling an absolute lie, as available proof later showed.

At first it was Gopal Godse who gave a juicy description in his book *Gandhihatya Ani Mee* of how Nathuram Godse remained unmoved and unshaken right till the end. Pradeep Dalvi, an admirer of Nathuram, just followed Gopal's footsteps in his play. But neither of these Nathuram devotees states how Mahatma Gandhi approached his death courageously in the very last moment of his life or how his faith in non-violence remained unbroken.

Justice Khosla describes what happened on the morning of November 15, 1949, when Nathuram Godse and Narayan alias Nana Apte were being taken to be hanged:

> Godse walked in front. His step occasionally faltered. His demeanour and general appearance evidenced a state of nervousness and fear. He tried to fight against it and keep up a bold exterior by shouting every few seconds

the slogan '*Akhand Bharat*'. But his voice had a slight croak in it, and the vigour with which he had argued his case at the trial and in the High Court seemed to have been all but expended.

The desperate cry was taken up by Apte, who shouted '*Amar Rahe*'! (Long Live!). His loud and firm tone made an uncanny contrast to Godse's at times almost feeble utterance. The superintendent of the jail and the district magistrate of Ambala who had come to certify the due execution of the High Court's order observed that, unlike Godse, Apte was completely self-possessed and displayed not the slightest sign of nervousness. He walked with a firm step with his shoulders thrown back and his head held high.

Taller than Godse by several inches, he appeared to dominate over him. There was, on his face, a look not so much of defiance and justification of what he had done, as of an inner sense of fulfilment, of looking forward to a rightful end to the proceedings which had occasioned so much sound and fury. It was said afterwards that Godse had, during his last days in jail, repented of his deed and declared that were he to be given another chance he would spend the rest of his life in the promotion of peace and the service of his country.

Apte on the other hand, maintained an unrelenting attitude. Till the very end he refused to admit his guilt, nor did he plead his innocence in the cringing tones of a beaten adversary. The study of Bhagwadgita and his own experiment in writing a treatise on philosophy may have taught him the futility of protest or prayer, or it may be his naturally stoic temperament, but he walked to his doom with the self-assurance and confidence of a man who is about to receive no more and no less than the expected and deserved reward for doing his duty.

A single gallows had been prepared for the execution of both. Two ropes, each with a noose, hung from the high crossbar in parallel lines. Godse and Apte were made to stand side by side, the black cloth bags were drawn over their heads and tied at the necks. After adjusting the nooses, the executioner stepped off the platform and pulled the lever.

Apte died almost at once and his still body swung in a slow oscillating movement, but Godse, though unconscious and unfeeling, continued to wriggle and wriggle and display signs of life in the shivering of his legs and the convulsing of his body for quite fifteen minutes. (*The Murder of the Mahatma*, 1963, pages 244–245).

(Another discrepancy arises in Nathuram's statements about Digambar Badge who was the witness for the prosecution.) Nathuram completely denied some statements made by Badge in his testimony.

'I know this Badge. But he rarely came to visit me. I too have not gone to see him for many years.' In Nathuram's original statement in English, the

exact words are 'Nor have I ever visited his place of residence since several years past'. Nathuram Godse's brother Gopal, too, has translated this as, 'I too have not gone to see him for many years'. This is not as exact as it should be. The more correct translation would be, 'For many years I have not been to his residence (or house) at all.'

In the eighth paragraph of his statement, Nathuram had said the following in English, 'I further say that I neither saw nor met Badge on 14th January, 1948 at Dadar either alone or in the company of Apte. I did not even know that Badge had come to Bombay on that day.'

While translating the above sentences in English into Marathi, Gopal Godse dropped Apte's name and instead of translating it as, 'I did not even know that Badge had come to Bombay on that day', he wrote, 'I didn't even know that Badge was going to leave for Bombay that day' and added to the confusion.

Though Nathuram denies in the eighth paragraph of his statement in court that he and Badge spoke to Apte on 10th January, he was lying. He also denied that on 14th January he and Apte had met Nathuram in Mumbai as decided earlier. It's also a downright lie that Nathuram did not know that Badge had come to Mumbai that day. As is the statement that he (Nathuram) was not directly or indirectly connected with Madanlal.

Even though Nathuram did concede that he had met Badge in Mumbai, his fabrication that the reason why he and Apte went to Delhi was only for a fierce but peaceful demonstration before Gandhiji was not accepted in court. None of the judges believed his hypocritical explanation that he had told Badge to come to Delhi since Badge wanted to participate in the demonstration.

Nathuram confessed that Badge came to meet him at Marina Hotel on 20th January. But he denied the reality that on that day Apte, Karkare, Gopal Godse, Badge and Shankar had all come together for a meeting in his (Nathuram's) hotel room. Nathuram's statement that so far as he knew Gopal had not arrived in Delhi was hundred per cent untrue.

As a historian, when I evaluated Nathuram's actions, the opinion I formed was that Nathuram was 'a hardened liar who crushed the truth', a criminal. And I haven't as yet found true and solid recorded proof to the contrary to make me change my opinion.

Dalvi's hero Nathuram addresses the audience in the very first scene and says: 'There's a deep wound in my heart, my mind, blow after blow on the same wound. The pieces of the country due to partition, the slaughter of refugees, the rape of my mothers and sisters. The grant of 55 crores we had to give to Pakistan to satisfy Gandhi's childish obstinacy and my Sindhu (Indus) river which was separated from united Hindustan and presented to Pakistan.'

At the end of the play, while speaking to Devdas Gandhi, Nathuram says, 'Partition was not necessary. It was definitely a wrong decision made by

Gandhi. Then the slaughter of the refugees. The 55 crores that was given to Pakistan to help it against our soldiers fighting in Kashmir and the obstinate, headstrong manner in which Gandhi fought for it were all unpardonable.' In fact, Nathuram's brother Gopal Godse has titled one of his books *Panchavanna Kotinche Bali* in an obvious reference to Gandhiji.

One could say that after Gandhi began his fast on January 13, 1948 over the problem of giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, Nathuram found a convenient reason to kill him. But it is clear from the testimonies and evidence of the Kapur Commission that for at least six months before this, Nathuram had been expressing his desire to assassinate Gandhi, in public meetings as well as in private discussions.

There were people in Pune, and other cities in Maharashtra, who believed that Nathuram was not a murderer but a martyr. According to them, his assassination of Gandhi was not a wrong action but absolutely right and carried out in order to protect religion and the nation. Today, the number of people who believe this is increasing. Even if the common man is curious to know what really happened, he cannot find the necessary means and time to find out the truth due to various reasons. Most people prefer myths to history. Many new shades get mixed with these myths with the passage of time. Hence, Nathuram's assassination of Gandhi 50 years ago is today being portrayed as the murder of a villain.

In October 1964, Karkare, Madanlal and Gopal Godse finished their term in prison and were released. In order to celebrate this, a Satyavinayak Pooja was organised in the Udyan Hall in Pune on November 12, 1964. Here, speaking in front of 150 to 200 people, G.V. Ketkar, the then editor of the daily *Tarun Bharat* revealed a sensational secret. He said that three months before Gandhiji's assassination, Nathuram used to tell him (Ketkar) that he wished to kill Gandhi. Ketkar said that while discussing the possible consequences of such an act, he had asked Nathuram to consider the political and social fallout. Ketkar also told the gathering that, personally, he was opposed to the idea of assassinating Gandhiji. After the explosion by Madanlal in the prayer meeting on 20th January, Badge returned to Pune. When Badge spoke to Ketkar about his future plans, Ketkar realised that he and his companions were going to assassinate Gandhiji.

When Ketkar was mentioning all this in a meeting, Gopal Godse, who was sitting next to him, even told him, 'Don't say anything more'. But Ketkar retorted, 'Now if I say all this they (i.e. the Congress government) are not going to arrest me'. (*The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi*, Part 1, page 61).

In October 1947, Nathuram Godse had requested Ketkar to write an article for *Agrani*. At this meeting, Ketkar reminded Nathuram of his speech in July and asked him if he really intended to murder Gandhiji. Nathuram

replied in the affirmative. For one hour or so, Ketkar tried to dissuade him. But it was of no use. However, till he testified before the Kapur Commission, Ketkar had never publicly mentioned this discussion with Nathuram.

The conclusions made at the end of the Kapur Commission Report about Ketkar are as follows:

- Ketkar knew in October or November 1947 that Gandhiji's life was in danger.
- From his conversation with Badge on January 23, 1948 or thereabouts, Ketkar knew about the conspiracy planned by Nathuram.
- Until he met Badge, Ketkar had no idea that Badge and Apte were also involved in the conspiracy to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi. But since Nathuram had told him in October or November 1947 that he (Nathuram) intended to assassinate Gandhi or such a plan existed, Ketkar knew of Nathuram's complicity. (*The Report of the Kapur Commission*, Part 2, page 358). But till November 12, 1964, Ketkar did not reveal this publicly. This has to be considered an offence on his part. There is no evidence to show that Ketkar took the lead and communicated the information he had to the Bombay government.

One thing is clear from the report of the Kapur Commission. At least three or four months before Gandhiji started a fast to hand over Rs 55 crore to Pakistan, Nathuram was already voicing his intention to assassinate Gandhiji to a senior leader of the Hindu Mahasabha like G.V. Ketkar, albeit in private. This means that it is not true that he decided to assassinate Gandhiji due to his fast. The fast was only an instrumental cause for Nathuram. To say that Gandhiji was 'the Victim of Fifty-Five Crores' is just to advance an argument in support of Nathuram's offence.

Actually this sum of Rs 55 crore was the money that was Pakistan's share, from the cash of Rs 375 crore in the vaults of the Reserve Bank of India before partition. On December 1 and 2, 1947, representatives of both countries had discussed the issue and decided that of the cash balance of Rs 375 crore, Pakistan's share was Rs 75 crore. Out of this sum of Rs 75 crore, Rs 20 crore had been given to Pakistan to temporarily take care of its financial needs when Pakistan was just coming into existence on August 14, 1947, and it was decided in the agreement of December 2, 1947 that the balance amount of Rs 55 crore should be handed over later by the Indian government to the Pakistan government.

Pakistan had a right to this cash of Rs 55 crore and the Indian government recognised this right. When Gopal Godse merely indicates this sum of Rs 55 crore as the 'balance or remaining amount', this term misleads the reader. In the second line of his original statement in English, Sardar Patel had used the term 'cash balances' and created a lot of confusion. (*Panchavanna Kotinche Bali*, page 143).

Many people have in their ignorance used words like 'donation' or 'gift' for this sum of Rs 55 crore. The Nathuram in Dalvi's play actually uses the word 'grant'. To give any 'gift', 'donation' or 'grant' is not binding on any person or government, nor is it inevitable.

The decision taken by Patel and Nehru on behalf of the government of India was in keeping with the law. The government of Pakistan had sent a memorandum to the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank in Karachi on January 6, 1948 asking for this sum of Rs 55 crore from India. On the same day, a summary of that memorandum had been sent in a telegram to C.D. Deshmukh, the then Governor of the Reserve Bank and Deshmukh had immediately sent a return reply by telegram.

In order to satisfy Pakistan's financial need, the Indian Reserve Bank had indicated its readiness to approve a temporary loan of Rs 10 crore and Deshmukh had been told that the Reserve Bank had to take a final decision and that the government of India would not interfere. That is why in the meeting at Lahore on January 11, Prime Minister Nehru had indicated that he was favourably disposed to give Pakistan Rs 10 crore as a temporary loan. Thereupon, Liaquat Ali asked Nehru 'Then why don't you give Pakistan the 55 crore rupees you owe us and put an end to the matter?'

Gandhiji was treating this matter of giving Rs 55 crore to Pakistan as a moral one. He felt that if his fast could calm down the atmosphere in India, especially in Delhi, then the atmosphere in Pakistan would automatically cool down too. Since the 13th of January was a Monday, it was Gandhiji's day for observing silence. So after he began his fast, his written statement was read out in the evening's prayer meeting. In this statement he had not said that he had begun a fast over the question of giving Rs 55 crore to Pakistan.

Even if one grants that this problem did occupy his mind, it does not seem as though it was the only reason. If it had been so, then Gandhiji would have ended his fast after the government of India had announced its decision on 15th January that Pakistan's share of Rs 55 crore should be handed over immediately. But this did not happen. One should not forget that Gandhiji continued his fast till 18th January.

Sardar Patel wasn't in Delhi from January 13 to 18. In his absence, the members of the central Cabinet gathered around Gandhiji's bed on the lawns of Birla House. They reconsidered the earlier decision to give Rs 55 crore to Pakistan. At night, some Sikh refugees from Pakistan held demonstrations opposite Birla House.

Nehru had just sat down in his car after meeting Gandhiji when he heard their slogans, 'Blood for Blood', and 'Let Gandhi Die'. Enraged, he got out of the car and screamed, 'The person who said let Gandhi die should repeat it in front of me. He will have to kill me first.' The demonstrators dispersed.

Today, the nature of Indian politics has changed so much that the fact

that political leaders like Gandhiji, Nehru and Sardar Patel had the courage to confront an angry mob unarmed seems like a fairy tale.

Nathuram Godse used to say that Mahatma Gandhi spent his entire political life fawning over Muslims and protecting fundamentalist Muslims at the cost of the welfare of Hindus. Even today his disciples and admirers stick to this line. At that time itself, there was criticism that Gandhiji started his fast on January 13 to save the lives of Muslims in Delhi.

On that day, morning newspapers carried news of the slaughter of Hindu and Sikh refugees from the North-West Frontier Province who were returning to India at Gujaranwala, a railway station in West Punjab, that had become part of Pakistan. Condemning this slaughter in his prayer meeting, Gandhiji said, 'Then and not till then shall I repent that I ever called it a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today, it is. I want to live to see the Pakistan not on paper, not in the orations of Pakistan orators, but in the daily life of every Pakistani Muslim . . . The fast is a bid for nothing less.' (*Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*).

In one of his speeches at a prayer meeting, Gandhiji said that the Muslim League should be held primarily responsible for the happenings in both parts of Hindustan. Shoaib Kureishi, a friend of Gandhiji, sent a letter protesting against this statement. Gandhiji's response was that he would never shy away from the truth and regardless of whether Muslims in Pakistan or in both countries liked or did not like what he said, he would continue to give advice. He told Pyarelal that he was unrepentant for what he had said about the Muslim League's responsibility for the existing state of affairs: 'I cannot in all honesty absolve it. Nor must I in this crisis mince words or keep back things which might displease others.' (Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, volume 2, pages 715–716).

On January 15, the Indian government announced its decision of not holding back the Rs 55 crore to be given to Pakistan but to hand it over immediately. Actually Rs 55 crore were not paid. The amount of Rs 10 crore given to Pakistan by the Indian Reserve Bank as a temporary loan was subtracted from Rs 55 crore and Rs 45 crore was handed over.

The student of history in not surprised by the fact that in his books, *Panchavanna Kotiche Bali* and *Panchavanna Kotinche Bali Gopal Godse* has justified the act of his elder brother and their associates. But his claim that he is relating the history of this incident objectively cannot hold when examined against available proof.

While relating the *Nathuramayan*, I have provided some examples, backed by adequate proof of how he has committed the two serious offences of suppressing the truth and telling a lie in both his books.

Pradeep Dalvi is a commercial playwright, after all! After hearing this entire *Nathuramayan*, he continues to sing the same tune that his play is based

on history. The glorification of Gandhiji's murderers carried out deliberately by Dalvi is absolutely consistent with the criminalisation of Indian politics today. Even though Vinay Apte, the director of the play says, 'We have not staged this play to plead on Nathuram's behalf,' if the playwright had not pleaded for Nathuram, the play would not have been given the free publicity it received.

After India became free, albeit in a fragmented manner, Nathuram assassinated a defenceless old man and sowed the seeds of politics based on murder. That poisonous tree has borne many fruits in the last fifty years. Those who wish to taste this fruit and experience the intoxication of power may do so happily. The atmosphere in the country is so badly polluted today that murderers are honoured as noble people and a truly noble-minded man is censured and called evil-minded.

From *Communalism Combat*, October 2000.

The Five Attempts on Gandhi's Life

Extracts from Mahatmyachi Akher (End of the Sage) *by Jagan Phadnis;* Gandhi Hatyakand (The Story of the Gandhi Murder) *and* Nathuramayana *by Y.D. Phadke, English translation by Mukta Rajadhyaksha.*

First Attempt: June 1934

Bomb thrown at Pune

During the Harijan Yatra in 1934, the Mahatma visited Pune. On June 25, he was to deliver a speech at the corporation auditorium. The Mahatma and Kasturba were travelling in a motorcade consisting of two similar cars. At one place en route, the car in which the Gandhis were travelling was detained at a railway level-crossing.

The first car arrived at the auditorium and the welcoming committee assumed that the Gandhis had arrived and stepped forward to welcome them; just then a bomb was thrown at the car, which exploded, grievously injuring the chief officer of the municipal corporation, two policemen and seven others. The bomb was reportedly hurled by anti-Gandhi Hindu extremists as mentioned by Mahatma's secretary Pyarelal in his book *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase* and by his biographer B.G. Tendulkar. Pyarelal has written that 'This time their attempt was very well planned and executed to perfection . . .' implying that the attempts before June 25, 1934 failed due to lack of planning and coordination. And also that the murderers were getting better with each attempt.

Pyarelal has said, 'These people kept photographs of Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders in their shoes. They were trained to shoot by using Gandhiji's photograph as a target, these were the same people who later murdered the Mahatma while he was striving to bring peace to a riot ravaged Delhi, in 1948.'

After the attack, speaking at the function to felicitate him, the Mahatma said, 'It is sad that this happened while I am working for the uplift of the Harijans. I have no desire for martyrdom as yet, but if it is to happen,

I am prepared to face it. It is easy to kill me. But in trying to kill me why are they inconsiderate to the innocents who are likely to be killed or injured along with me? My wife and three young girls who are like daughters to me were travelling in the car with me. How have they angered you?'

The attacker escaped and there is no record of investigations or arrests. This was the first documented attempt in India on the life of the Mahatma. Many historians have alleged that this was the work of the Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte gang.

Second Attempt: July 1944

Nathuram Attacks the Mahatma, in Panchgani

After his release from the Aga Khan Palace imprisonment in May 1944, Mahatma Gandhi contracted malaria and was advised rest by his physician. He retired to Panchgani, a mountain resort near Pune famous for its pure air and Parsi boarding schools. He stayed at the Dilkhush Bungalow in Panchgani. A group of 18–20 men reached Panchgani by a chartered bus from Pune and held a day-long protest against the Mahatma and shouted anti-Gandhi slogans. When the Mahatma was told about this he invited the leader of this group, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, for a discussion. Nathuram rejected the invitation and continued with the demonstration.

During the prayer meeting that evening, Nathuram Godse, dressed in a Nehru shirt, pyjama (loose Indian pants) and jacket, rushed towards the Mahatma. He was brandishing a dagger in his hand and shouting anti-Gandhi slogans. Nathuram was overpowered by Manishankar Purohit, proprietor of the Surti Lodge of Pune and D. Bhillare Guruji of Satara, who later became a Congress legislator from Mahabaleshwar. Both swore under oath about the veracity of this attack while deposing before the Kapur Commission, which was set up to investigate the conspiracy angle behind the murder of the Mahatma. The other youth accompanying Godse ran away. This led to a panic in the prayer meeting but Gandhiji remained calm. He asked Godse to spend eight days with him so that he could understand Godse's point of view. Godse rejected this invitation and was allowed to go by a magnanimous Mahatma.

Before leaving Pune, Godse had boasted to his journalist friends that some important news concerning Gandhi would soon reach them from Panchgani and it did. Joglekar, a reporter with a Marathi newspaper *Agrani*, published and edited by Nathuram Godse from Pune, corroborated this fact. A. David, the then editor of *Pune Herald* swore on oath while deposing before the Kapur Commission that an attempt to murder the Mahatma was carried out by Nathuram Godse at Panchgani that day. The Kapur Commission rejected this theory because some close associates of the Mahatma who were not present at the said prayer meeting could not corroborate the facts.

The police record shows that there were demonstrations against Gan-

dhiji and that Nathuram Godse was held for trying to rush at the Mahatma shouting anti-Gandhi slogans but does not state whether he was armed. Dr Sushila Nayyar, the Mahatma's physician and close associate, testified that one of the protesters was found to be carrying a dagger but could not confirm whether it was Nathuram Godse. But the two men who overpowered Nathuram and later went on to hold very responsible posts were clear in their recollection of the incident at separate instances that they caught and disarmed Nathuram Godse.

The fact also remains undisputed that Nathuram Godse was part of an armed gang of protesters and it is very likely that the gang consisted of Narayan Apte, Karkare and Gopal Godse, the eventual killers of the Mahatma and fanatical followers of Savarkar, a leader of the right-wing Hindu extremists.

Third Attempt: September 1944

Threat to life at Sevagram: Godse involved

Mahatma Gandhi was preparing to hold talks with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha was opposed to this, Nathuram Godse and L.G. Thatte openly campaigned against this and threatened to stop Gandhiji from meeting Jinnah by any means publicly. The Mahatma began his talks with Jinnah in Bombay on September 9, 1944; the talks lasted for eighteen days.

The Mahatma travelled from Sevagram to Bombay for the talks. Godse and Thatte led a gang of men to stop Gandhi and were joined by some from Bengal. This gang picketed the Ashram to ensure that the Mahatma did not leave for Bombay. Dr Sushila Nayyar testified at the Kapur Commission inquiry that Nathuram Godse was stopped and detained by ashramites as he tried to reach the Mahatma and a dagger was found on his person. The police report of the assault also placed before the Kapur Commission says that a *jambiya* (Indian curved half-sword akin to the machete) was confiscated from one of the group consisting of Nathuram Godse, L.G. Thatte and other unnamed protesters who were arrested while trying to prevent the Mahatma leaving the Ashram. The police report says it wasn't certain that they meant to harm the Mahatma, but they were armed and determined to stop the Mahatma from meeting Jinnah at any cost as evident from their recorded statements.

Pyarelal, in his letter to Tej Bahadur Sapru says, 'The leader of the protesters at Sevagram, an extremely bitter and fanatical die-hard, was ready to go to any lengths to stop Gandhiji from meeting Jinnah. The arresting officer who recovered the dagger from the leader of the band asked him mockingly, "whether he wanted to become a martyr?" The leader replied that when Gandhi was eventually killed one of them would become a martyr. The officer again asked him why they were wasting their time and lives in the fight between their leaders and Gandhi. If Gandhi was to be stopped, why didn't they leave it to

Savarkar, their leader? The leader of the gang said, "If Savarkar talks with Gandhi it will be an honour for Gandhi. The time will not come for Savarkar to talk to Gandhi. Gandhi will be dealt with by our lowly orderly".' Pyarelal said that the person indicated by the group leader was Nathuram Godse.

No clarification is given about the others in the gang. This was the third time that members of the Hindu Mahasabha from Pune were involved in an untoward incident; Godse was actually named in two of them and in all likelihood the other unnamed persons were the same as the gang which finally succeeded in murdering the Mahatma.

Fourth Attempt: June 1946

Train sabotaged en route to Pune

On the way to Pune, the train carrying Gandhiji known as the Gandhi Special met with an accident between the Nerul and Karjat stations. The engine driver in his report claimed that boulders were placed on the tracks of the train with the intention to derail it. The train crashed into the boulders but a tragedy was averted because the engine driver was alert and slowed down the train before impact. The Pune police claimed that the boulders were placed to stop goods trains by looters. There were no goods trains on that section before or after the train known as the Gandhi Special carrying Gandhiji and his entourage. The police had not disclaimed sabotage and since the Gandhi Special was the only train on that route at that time it must have been the target.

On June 30, speaking at a prayer meeting in Pune, the Mahatma said, 'By the grace of God I have escaped from the jaws of death seven times. I have not hurt anybody nor do I consider anybody to be my enemy, I can't understand why there are so many attempts on my life. Yesterday's attempt on my life has failed. I will not die just yet, I aim to live till the age of 125.' 'But who will allow you to live that long?' was the retort from Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the man who eventually murdered the Mahatma.

Fifth Attempt: January 20, 1948

Madan Lal explodes a bomb, New Delhi

Today the Mahatma was late in starting his prayer meeting, the public address system had failed and thus the delay. The Mahatma had just a couple of days previously ended his fast, after he had been assured about the establishment of peace between the communities in Delhi. It was the period after Partition and also in the immediate aftermath of the Cabinet's decision to give Rs 55 million to Pakistan.

Madan Lal Kashmirilal Pahwa, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, Narayan Dattatreya Apte, Vishnu Ramkrishna Karkare, Digambar Ramchandra Badge, Gopal Godse and Shankar Kistaiya congregated at the Birla Bhavan. Madan

Lal Pahwa and Vishnu Karkare were at the Birla Bhavan and the others reached the prayer meeting via the rear entrance by a taxi driven by Surjeet Singh who was the 14th witness for the prosecution in the Mahatma Gandhi murder trial. Nathuram Godse was the last to reach Birla Bhavan. Madanlal Pahwa tried to bribe Choturam, a driver staying in the Birla Bhavan servants' quarters to allow him to approach the podium where the Mahatma was sitting, ostensibly to take a photograph of him. When questioned by Choturam about the need for photographing the Mahatma from the back and also when queried about the lack of a camera, Madan Lal walked off as if he was returning to the taxi, but instead went up to the wall behind the podium and placed the gun cotton slab on the wall and ignited the fuse. The others saw that the plan was not succeeding so they rushed towards the waiting taxi and left, leaving Madan Lal Pahwa, Karkare, Badge and Shankar Kistaiya behind. The bomb went off, failing to create a panic.

Madan Lal was identified by Sulochana Devi, the 15th witness in the Mahatma Gandhi murder trial, who lived less than 100 metres from Birla Bhavan and who had come looking for her three-year-old son Mahendra, who used to play with other children in the servants' quarters of Birla Bhavan. Sulochana Devi had seen the gang of eventual murderers coming to Birla Bhavan, Madan Lal talking to Choturam, placing the bomb on the wall, the others rushing towards the car, Madan Lal lighting the fuse, the bomb exploding and the taxi speeding off without Madan Lal. She identified Madan Lal as the bomber to Fulsingh, watchman at Birla Bhavan, an armed policeman and a soldier, who were the first to reach the spot where the bomb went off and who grabbed a fleeing Madan Lal. On frisking Madan Lal at the police camp nearby it was discovered that he was also carrying a hand grenade on his person. The last unsuccessful attempt on the Mahatma's life thus ended in a fiasco.

On interrogation, Madan Lal admitted that he was part of a seven-member gang who wanted to kill the Mahatma. The plan was that Madan Lal would explode the bomb as close to the podium as possible and Badge or Kistaiya would shoot the Mahatma in the ensuing panic and stampede and use the chaotic situation to effect an escape. Karkare was to compound the chaos by hurling hand grenades. Badge panicked at the last minute because he saw through the ruse of Godse and Apte. It would have been impossible for him to escape. Without letting the others know, Badge left his revolver in the taxi and told his servant Kistaiya to do the same and also forbade him from doing anything unless specifically ordered by Badge. But the late start to the prayer meeting, Choturam's cross-questioning of Madanlal and Madan Lal's inability to explode the bomb near the podium panicked the gang of murderers. They abandoned the murder plan, and Madan Lal Pahwa. Karkare made

good his escape, Badge and Kistaiya merged with the crowd and made their way to the Hindu Mahasabha office where he had a showdown with Godse and Apte and was told to go.

That night Madan Lal took the police to the two hotels where the gang members were staying, Nathuram Godse and Apte at the Marina Hotel and the rest of them at the Sharief Hotel. His panicked co-conspirators had flown the coop. The police confiscated a letter and some laundry from the hotel, which corroborated the involvement of people from Maharashtra. Although there were so many previous attempts on the Mahatma's life by the gang led by Nathuram and Apte and although the laundry confiscated from Marina Hotel bore the initials NVG (Nathuram Vinayak Godse), the police did not act on the evidence.

The gang members returned to their hometowns. Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte, after returning to Pune via Bombay, continued with their intention to kill the Mahatma. They embarked for Gwalior where they purchased a Beretta automatic and eleven bullets with the help of Dr. Parchure and Dandavate. They reached Delhi on 29 January and stayed at the retiring rooms at the station.

The Final Attempt: January 30 1948

The Mahatma is no more

At 5.10 p.m., Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the murderer, got close to the Mahatma and shot him thrice in the chest from point-blank range and succeeded in finally snuffing out the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma.

The Hindu Mahasabha and its followers celebrated the murder of the Mahatma by distributing sweets. More than one million people congregated in Delhi on January 31, 1948 to bid a tearful adieu to the Father of the Nation. A sea of humanity followed the funeral cortège of the Mahatma from Birla Bhavan to Raj Ghat.

From *Communalism Combat*, October 2000.

Last Days of the Mahatma

JAGAN PHADNIS

Mahatmyachi Akher (End of the Sage)
Jagan Phadnis

Lokvangmaya Griha, Mumbai, 1994

English translation by Suresh Bhosale and Bhakti Bhalwankar

To all those known–unknown
Men, Women and Children
who participated in the freedom struggle . . .

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Introduction

End of the Sage is my fourth book. This book is titled *End of the Sage* because it is based on the last days of Mahatma Gandhi and the events that took place in the last phase of his politics. This is not a biography of Mahatma Gandhi. Many erudite scholars from our country and the world over have written volumes on Gandhiji. However I feel that a thought is not taken cognizance of in these writings and it is for that reason Mahatma Gandhi was murdered. Those whose hands are stained by the blood of Mahatma Gandhi and those who support his killers sometimes say that Gandhi was killed since he was

responsible for the partition, and sometimes they say that he was killed because of fifty-five crores of rupees which were required to be paid to Pakistan at his behest. But Gandhi was not killed for either of these reasons. Gandhiji was killed for reasons beyond these. I have tried to analyse these reasons with the help of evidence of events that took place between 1934 and 1946. I cannot say how far my efforts have succeeded. The readers will have to decide. Every event described in this book is based on evidence. And I do not want to take credit for this research. Efforts have been made to substantiate that Mahatma Gandhi was not killed because of the partition or for fifty-five crore rupees, on the basis of the thoughts of some of the scholars in this country.

I had been thinking since many years, since 1988, of writing a book on the basis of these views relating to Mahatma Gandhi. I had been discussing the subject with many persons. Some of the leaders who participated in the freedom struggle did not know how many attempts were made to kill Gandhiji. The information I was giving surprised them. Hence, I felt the need for such a book. I also wondered if, since so much has been written about Gandhiji, my book was necessary. However, the assassination of Gandhi is being supported publicly since the last two to three years. A false propaganda is being made so that the masses accept the reasons advanced by them for the assassination of Gandhiji. A campaign is being undertaken to oppose the concept of Gandhi being the Father of the Nation. Younger generations have started believing in the false reasons advanced, and hence my urge to write a book on the basis of available evidence became intense.

Voluminous books are not read. Hence, I felt that the book may be small in size, but it is necessary to deal with the pointed issue as to why the life of the Father of the Nation could not be saved in spite of receiving information fifteen days earlier than the day on which he was killed. In fact, efforts to kill him had been made since 1934, when both the reasons – i.e. the issue of Gandhi's role in the partition and that of paying rupees fifty-five crores – did not exist at all. This limited subject is dealt with here.

Three years ago, the responsibility of penning the editorials of *Daily Pudhari* came upon me. During this period, I came across many people who said that 'they did not know this' after reading some of my occasional writings in these editorials. Thus the urge to write such a book became acute. My friend Datta Saraf asked me for an article for the Diwali issue of *Gavkari*. I sent an article based on information about the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. A review of my article was published in *Maharashtra Times* which said that it was worthy of serious thought. Readers responded positively to the article in *Gavkari*. Many wrote back saying that they were not aware of the claims made in the said article. This book, *End of the Sage*, is an outcome of this process.

When I decided to write the book, help from friends started pouring in. Prof. Omprakash Kalame, Dr Ashok Chousalkar, Baal Potdar, Prof.

Suresh Shirodkar provided material available with them for my reference. My task became easier due to Prof. Kalame, the Head of the Branch of Journalism of Shivaji University. In the matter of expenses also, my money was saved because Prof. Kalame had collected files of *The Times of India*, *Hindu*, *Hitwadi*, *Sakal*, etc., from all available sources pertaining to the period since the 1930s and kept them in his department. Otherwise, I would have to visit Pune, Mumbai, Madras, etc., for gathering reference material. Because of Prof. Kalame's visionary habit, all these newspapers became available to me at Kolhapur itself. He has done a great job which will be appreciated when one sees the references. While I was writing this book I used to call Mr Baal Potdar a 'Pathan' (a moneylender who coerces borrowers for recovery of loans) because, like a Pathan, he used to come personally to verify how many pages I had written. Prof. Shirodkar guided and assisted me even for checking the manuscript. Three years ago, I was able to hoodwink death only because of Dr Gokhale. He saved my life by performing a major surgery on me. Several bottles of saline solution and blood were given because of which I could not strain my hands – the slightest strain resulted in swelling. Hence I could not write. I gave dictation to my young friend Subhash Pawar, who typed it up. If he had not done so, perhaps this book could not have been completed. I am profoundly grateful to all of them. This book has been produced only because of the help of all these persons. I am not the person to judge whether I have utilized their assistance to its optimum.

When I casually opened the topic of writing a book on Mahatma Gandhi, Anil Mehta asked me impatiently, 'When will you hand over the manuscript?' Mr Mehta had published my two earlier books. I could not hand over the manuscript to him within the assured time. Still, the book was published, which reflects the promptness of Mr Mehta. I am responsible for mistakes and shortcomings, if any, in the book. But if there is anything appreciable in it, the credit goes to all my friends.

Kolhapur — Jagan Phadnis
2 October 1994

For the Second Edition

I had doubts in my mind about the response to my book *End of the Sage* on the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, the reasons for his murder and the negligence in saving his life, when there are thousands of books written the world over on the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. At the same time, there have been anti-Gandhi discussions taking place amongst the articulate class since the last few years. I felt that my book will not be responded to in such an atmosphere. However, I also felt that it was necessary, in such an atmosphere, to deal with this subject. In this way, the book *End of the Sage* was

completed by me. I came to know from letters received from readers that the book has been welcomed in all parts of Maharashtra. The letters from readers enhanced my enthusiasm. Some readers asked me why I had not dealt with the role of Gandhiji in respect of Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; some readers suggested that I should incorporate details of the Khilafat Movement. The main purpose of my book was to expose the real reasons for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. My book is not a biography of Gandhi. Hence, it has not gone into the thoughts and philosophy of Gandhiji. I received letters which admitted honestly that they had not come across such information about Gandhiji and that nobody had told them these things, hence they had false conceptions about Gandhi's murder. Many readers informed me that I had put forth a new thought by dealing with the reasons behind the murder of Gandhi which had not been discussed by anyone so far. I cannot say to what extent this is true. However, recently a biography of Gandhi, *Ekla Chalo Re*, written by Acharya Shripad Kelkar has been published. In this book, Acharya Kelkar has said: 'Renowned journalist Jagan Phadnis has written a studied and enlightening first book in Marathi on partition and the murder of Gandhi.' I am referring to this not only because he has appreciated the book, but to emphasize that there was a need to discuss all the reasons behind the murder of Gandhi. It is a need of the hour to make the whole country aware that Gandhi was not murdered because of the partition, the issue of Rs 55 crores or for his appeasement of Muslims. I have made efforts befitting my strength. I agree that there may be inadequacies and shortcomings.

Mehta Publishing House had published the first edition of *End of the Sage* and it was to publish the second edition also. The publication schedule had already been prepared by them. Hence, it was difficult to publish the second edition on 30 January 1998. Meanwhile my friends working in the fields of politics, social welfare and education organized a programme for propagating the reasons behind the murder of Gandhi. It was proposed to publish a reprint of the book. Gandhi's martyrdom was to complete fifty years on 30 January 1998. Hence, it was decided to publish the second edition on that day. Mr Anil Mehta of Mehta Publishing House was informed of this. My friend Anil Mehta did not put forth any excuse or reasons relating to manners, tradition and practice, but permitted us to publish the second edition with another publisher. He may not like it if I thank him for this gesture. Yet it is my duty to thank him.

In 1989, a major surgical operation was performed on me and I was literally reborn. Dr V.P. Gokhale of Pune brought me back from the doors of death. Thereafter, I felt that I had completely recovered. But the 'gene' inherited by me raised its head once again. Another major surgery was required to be performed on me in 1997. It was found that I was suffering from cancer which was in its first phase. It required chemotherapy. It caused great pain.

While I was fighting the cancer, my heart started to send alarming signals. The investigations showed that angiography had to be done. I was at the doors of death a second time. But this time too, my life was saved because of the treatment of Dr P.V. Gokhale, Dr Shailesh Puntambekar, Dr M.S. Hiremath from Pune and Dr Dilip Kulkarni from Kolhapur. I am indebted to them. I will not thank my brother-in-law, Dr Sudhir Dongre, for his efforts for my speedy recovery. But I would be ungrateful if I did not mention his name. Another brother-in-law, Shri Pradeep Dongre, arranged for the blood by persuading donors during both the surgeries. Hence, I experienced the adage in Hindi '*Har Lahu ka Rang Lal Hai*'. I have no adequate words for expressing my gratitude towards my friend from Kolhapur, Shri Dilip Pawar – especially his daughters Madhavi, Anuradha and niece Indrayani and their entire family. Many gave me financial assistance during my sickness. I am grateful to all those persons.

The book was printed in the shortest possible time by Shri Nihal Shipurkar of Bharati Mudranalay and it is aesthetically pleasing. I thank Shri Chandramohan Kulkarni for the cover page. I also thank everyone from the People's Publishing House, including Prof. Vilas Ransubhe.

Kolhapur — Jagan Phadnis
30 January 1998

For the Third Edition

I feel greatly elated to hand over to readers the third edition of the book *End of the Sage*, on the subject of the reasons behind the murder of Mahatma Gandhi and the possibility of saving his life. The first edition was sold out earlier than expected. The second edition was printed a little late but it has also sold out, and now the third edition is being published. Nowadays, people read less. Readers who purchase books for reading are becoming a rare species. The fate of books on politics is even worse. The hate campaign against Gandhi is a known phenomenon. It has not erupted all of a sudden. Since the last 50 years there have been consistent efforts to spread hatred against Gandhi. The Congress used his name only for winning the elections. There is hatred amongst the people against the Congress for its monopoly of power during the last fifty years. The Congress has only capitalized on the name of Gandhi. This has caused damage to the image of the Congress. An atmosphere of prejudice against Gandhi has been created simultaneously vis-à-vis the monopoly of power of the Congress. The name of Mahatma Gandhi is associated with the Congress. The hatred and prejudice are results of these. Against this background, when the book analysing real reasons behind the murder of Mahatma Gandhi became available, the readers welcomed it. It is because of this that the third edition has been published so early.

Mahatma Gandhi was murdered because of the atmosphere of hatred

created by Hindutva ideology and the frustration of the Hindutva communalists. Mahatma Gandhi was a victim of the politics of hatred spread by Hindu organizations which nourished the Hindutva ideology. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is a massive organization. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel himself has said that the RSS ideology was responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Hence, I have not written this book in the hope that it will be read by the Sangh Parivar and that they will change their opinions. If the Sangh Parivar read this book and change their attitude, I will be more than happy. But it is not the purpose of my writing this book. The common man, who is not associated with Hindu organizations, is falling prey to the false propaganda being made by them. Such people should read this book and think over the real reasons behind the murder of Gandhiji, and only thereafter should they form their opinion. It is the purpose of this book to make available evidence which may be useful for people to make up their minds. Since the third edition of my book is being published, I am justified in claiming, with modesty, that the purpose of this book has been fulfilled.

I have received numerous letters from readers. All of them admitted that nobody had given information about the attempts to murder Gandhi before the partition. The reasons which I have narrated have never been told to them by anybody. Now their misunderstanding is cleared. These were the responses of the readers. The English press seldom takes note of the subjects and thoughts expressed in regional languages. But an editorial piece was written in *The Times of India* dated 31st January 1998, and I am proud of it. Some have sent me letters assuming that I am against Brahmins. But I am not against Brahmins. I am against Brahmanism. I am against communal politics. The British had taken over power from different provincial rulers at different times. In some provinces, they took over power from Nawabs, in some from Rajputs and Jats. The British took over power from Brahmins in a few provinces, in which Maharashtra is prominent. The established class during that time in Maharashtra were the Brahmins. Most of these established Brahmins had a feeling that they would once again come to power after the British left. Lokhitwadi had written an article on 1 April 1849 titled 'Fruit from the English Raj', in which he mentioned what the Brahmins of Pune were discussing. He quoted, 'Oye, Baba, how Yadavas died in the past! Did Ravana not try to bring about annihilation? All the Gods were put behind the bars. Thereafter, Rama took over the Lanka through Vanaras, is it not? Whether or not the stones floated on water? Similarly, the British will be doomed. Religion will be (re-)established. Brahmins will be happy and other people will observe castes and religion. The Brahmins will rule once again.' This was the discussion that was taking place amongst the Brahmins of Pune. It was their hope and ambition that Brahmin hegemony would be established once again. The hopes of such Brahmins were rekindled and strengthened when Lokmanya Tilak started the movement for

Self-Rule. Mahatma Gandhi ensured participation of all sections of society in the freedom struggle. Because of this, the Brahmins started apprehending loss of power and supremacy to the other sections which outnumbered Brahmins in large proportions. Therefore, the Brahmins became adversaries of Gandhi. Not all the Brahmins hated Gandhi, but I have mentioned the names of some prominent Brahmins who spearheaded the hate campaign. An analysis of the Brahmin class and its ideology cannot be avoided because it is an established class. Also, it is not an analysis of the Brahmin people but of the vested interests of the established class which is attempted here. The ruling classes of other states – prominently Jats and Rajputs – came to power because they were part of the majority masses. These states did not have Brahmin hegemony in politics. That is the reason why the anti-Gandhi movement did not become a systematic campaign in other states, except Maharashtra. Some did try in other states but they did not succeed in instigating the people as it happened in Maharashtra.

I have not taken a stand against Lokmanya Tilak. Lokmanya Tilak tried to seek the support of the Muslims by signing the Lucknow Pact with Barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The Swadeshi Movement and Non Cooperation Movement were also started by Lokmanya Tilak. I am of the opinion that Mahatma Gandhi broadened the base of these movements by ensuring participation of the masses in the freedom struggle. If I were against Lokmanya Tilak, I would not have said so. The thoughts of Lokmanya Tilak on social issues cannot be agreed with. Lokmanya Tilak was an extremist as far as tolerance was concerned. When he had differences with Agarkar, he referred to Agarkar as a 'dog on the grass-heap'. Those who claimed to be pro-Tilak were also mostly non-tolerant. Followers of Tilak made false allegations against those with whom they had a difference of opinion. Even Namdar Gopal Krishna Gokhale was not spared from such attacks. When Lokmanya Tilak was convicted in the treason case, Gokhale colluded with Morley to ensure that Tilak was punished. The *Hindu Panch* from Pune had alleged that Gokhale removed his political enemy (Lokmanya Tilak) from his path. It was the tendency of those who claimed themselves as followers of Lokmanya Tilak, to indulge in character assassination of their opponents. The idea of murdering Gandhi emerged from such a non-tolerant tendency.

Nathuram Godse was in the Congress before joining the RSS. Prof. Rajendra Singh, the chief of the RSS, has said in the interview he gave on 9 July 1998 to a private channel, Zee India, that Godse had no connection with the RSS. Nathuram Godse might have been in the Congress for some time before joining the RSS. But he could not digest the aims–objectives and programmes of the Congress. Therefore he dissociated from the Congress and joined a Hindu organization, the RSS. Nathuram Godse had been under the influence of the Sangh ideology. Mahatma Gandhi was murdered for this ideology. Hence,

when Rajendra Singh argues that Godse had no relations with the RSS and, therefore, says that he had been in the Congress before joining the RSS, his argument appears pitiable. Some readers have quoted this argument in their letters and it is apt that it is explained in this foreword to the third edition. Gopal Godse, brother of Nathuram Godse, himself admitted in his interview given to *The Times of India* (30 January 1948) that Nathuram was associated with the RSS but the RSS people are denying it as they are dishonest. There are examples in Indian history since ancient times of attacks on those who challenged Brahmin hegemony by torturing them and propagating false history by destroying the literature of anti-Brahminists. The communal forces have undertaken a campaign of creating a distorted history about Mahatma Gandhi ever since they became powerful. It is a pleasure for me that readers have supported this book till its third edition in such an atmosphere created by communal forces.

Kolhapur
15 July 1998

Jagan Phadnis

The Hope of Supremacy

The sunset of that day took away all the light in India and the night brought along with it an ominous shadow of death. If that evening could have been averted, Indian politics would have taken a different turn. The sun rises and it sets. Nobody can stop the flow of time. However, could the diabolic incident that took place in the evening of 30 January 1948 have been averted? Was it utterly impossible to stop the occurrence of this incident? The Sage had to lay down his life and the frail body of the epoch-making man fell on the earth. Was it so difficult to keep the soul safe in his body? The Iron Man of India, Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, had told the Home Minister of Mumbai, Morarji Desai, ten days well in advance of the murder of Gandhiji that, 'I have also come to know from my sources that Mahatma Gandhi will be murdered.' Sardar Patel had received information about the conspiracy of Gandhi's murder fifteen days prior to the murder and thereafter, a bomb blast took place in the prayer meeting of Gandhi on 20 January 1948. Police had caught the planter of the bomb, Madanlal Pahwa. The names of participants in the conspiracy of murder of Gandhi were revealed in his statement. The place the conspirators belonged to was also revealed. But the police could not arrest them. If the police attached to the Home Ministry headed by Iron Man Patel had taken action on the basis of the information given by Madanlal Pahwa, then Mahatma Gandhi would not have been murdered on 30 January 1948. Therefore, a question that demands an answer: were Nathuram Godse and his associates in the conspiracy the only persons responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi? Or did the responsibility lie with some others? Were there

were some reasons behind the murder of Mahatma Gandhi or was it a part of an ideology? Some so-called incidents such as the partition of the country, Rs 55 crores to be given to Pakistan or Gandhi's appeasement of Muslims were being put forth by the Hindu communalists for justifying the murder of Gandhi. When some incidents in the life of Mahatma Gandhi such as the partition, Rs 55 crores and the appeasement of Muslims are taken into consideration, it will be realized that the reasons put forward for the murder are not only superfluous but totally false. Instead of these reasons, the real reasons behind this murder are the ideology and the attitude. That is why, in spite of the fact that the truth behind the partition and the issue of Rs 55 crores have come to light, the supporters of Gandhi's murder never repent. On the contrary, it is being propagated as a noble task. The present generations also believe that the reasons behind Gandhi's murder were the partition, Rs 55 crores and the appeasement of Muslims because of their ignorance of history and the loss of memories among past generations. Congressmen use the name of Mahatma Gandhi only for securing power. They have no love for Gandhiji. They are least bothered about the false propaganda made against Gandhi. They simply do not care. Hence, no Congressman felt it necessary to tell the truth about Gandhi during the last fifty years. To get elected is the only condition for any Congress candidate. Hence, if it is felt that a criminal can get elected, then they give him a ticket. If any film star or actress has prospects of getting elected, they offer them candidature. Such candidates are sponsored. Congress tickets are given to feudal lords and moneybags who have prospects of winning elections, even if they have never shown any interest in the ideology and objectives of Mahatma Gandhi. Such people do not consider it necessary to tell the truth and make the masses aware of the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi. In order to vitiate the atmosphere, false propaganda is made by the Hindutva forces. Hence, the common masses started believing that whatever the Hindutva elements propagated about Mahatma Gandhi, using the tactics of Goebbels, was true. Progressive elements did not display any affinity towards Gandhiji. Hence, even these parties did not feel it necessary to expose the falsehood of the propaganda being indulged in by Hindutva forces. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was fighting against communalism. During Nehru's time, communal forces remained dormant because of Nehru's struggle against communalism, his charismatic personality, his liberal thinking and the influence he had on international politics. Communal forces remained dormant, but it did not mean they were eliminated. But most secular forces wrongly assumed that the communal forces were eliminated. During Indira Gandhi's regime, affairs of the Congress Party centred around one person, and this centralization of power was sought to be concealed from the people by resorting to populist programmes like economic reforms and the politics of poverty alleviation. Hence, communal forces could not raise their head during Indira Gandhi's

regime. The leadership of Rajiv Gandhi was immature. He had no long-term vision. Hence, he resorted to basic reforms in a haphazard manner in the style of quick whitewashing. That is why, when the court gave judgement in favour of Shah Bano, he changed the law meant for relief of the poor, allowed the divorce of Muslim women at the behest of orthodox religious leaders and rich Muslims. This resulted in placing a readymade weapon in the hands of communal forces which started alleging that it was an appeasement of Muslims by the Congress. They started a hate campaign against Muslims. In order to counter it, Rajiv Gandhi allowed unlocking of the disputed place at the Babri Masjid and permitted *Shilanyas* (ceremony of laying the foundation stone). Against this background, the supporters of the murder of Mahatma Gandhi started a systematic campaign of sympathizing with the murderers of Gandhi, alleging that Gandhi was responsible for the payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan and also for the partition. This is the reason why communal forces, which had remained dormant so far, started publicly felicitating the murderers of Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi was not murdered because of the partition and the payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi started an indefinite hunger strike from 13 January 1948, but it was not at all for the payment of 55 crores to Pakistan. When it was not certain when and how independence would be bestowed on India, and when the issues of partition or compensation to Pakistan were not even in existence, attempts were made to eliminate Mahatma Gandhi. In some of these incidents, the name of Nathuram Godse did figure. He was taken into police custody also. Why were these attempts made? How many attempts to murder Gandhi were made in Pune even before Independence? How is it that the murderers hailed from Maharashtra? If it were true that Mahatma Gandhi was murdered on account of partition, Rs 55 crores or his appeasement of Muslims, then the same feelings of hatred against Gandhi ought to have been expressed in other parts of the country, and at least some attempts by a few groups from other parts of the country would have taken place after Independence. These did not happen. All those attempts at murdering Gandhi were made by persons from Maharashtra only, and the stigma of the murder of Gandhi still sticks to Maharashtra. Two attempts to murder Gandhi were made after Independence. One of them was successful. But before Independence four attempts were made, which failed. All these incidents have been discussed in the ensuing chapters. Mahatma Gandhi had said, after his life was saved in one of the incidents at Pune, 'I have come back in one piece from the jaws of death seven times by the grace of God.' Fourteen years before the actual murder, an attempt to murder Gandhi was made in June 1934 at Pune. Seven persons were injured then. Fortunately, Gandhi was saved. Then, why were the Hindutva elements after the blood of Gandhi at Pune? Why did the other incidents, such as attempts to murder him at Panchgani, Sevagram and Pune by the derailment of the train in which

Gandhi was travelling, take place? Mr J.D. Nagarwalla, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, had a clue that there was a conspiracy to kidnap Gandhi. If the period during which all these attempts were made is taken into consideration, it is clear that they were not for the partition and not at all for the amount of 55 crores. The subject of this book is very limited. It is not the purpose here to write a biography or to describe the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi. What was Mahatma Gandhi's role in the partition? How did the partition take place? Who caused it? What is the matter of Rs 55 crores? Why were attempts to kill Mahatma Gandhi made at a time when the possibility of gaining Independence for the country was remote? Why were the persons who attempted this mainly Hindutva ideologists from Maharashtra? It is the need of the hour to analyse all these questions.

The thinking behind murdering Gandhi took shape in Maharashtra. The political and social circumstances in Maharashtra were its real causes. If these causes are explored, then it will be clear that Mahatma Gandhi was not killed on account of the partition or the amount of Rs 55 crores. Except Madanlal Pahwa, the others who tried to murder Gandhi were from Maharashtra. Pahwa was a displaced person from Pakistan. There was an anti-Gandhi atmosphere in other parts of the country, but the opponents of Gandhi in other parts of the country were not such fanatics and extremists like his opponents in Maharashtra. Why did this happen? The British, who came as traders, ruled India for 150 years. British traders, the East India Company and the British rulers were helped by Hindu moneylenders and feudal lords of Bengal (Acharya S.D. Jawdekar, *Modern India*; M.C. Hill, *Bengal of 1756–57*; P.E. Roberts, *History of British Hindustan*; historian Shejwalkar's articles in *Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal*.) The British took over Bengal from the Muslims first. Thereafter, they annexed other princely states and provinces, defeating the Rajputs and Jats. In Maharashtra, power was in the hands of Brahmins after the murder of Sambhaji Raje till the unfurling of the British flag on Shaniwarwada of Pune. The British usurped power in Maharashtra from the Brahmins. Maharashtra was the only state where the British took over power from Brahmins! It will be apt to quote from an article written by Lokahitwadi on 1 April 1849. He wrote: 'When will the screams of Brahmins be heard by God? Then someone, a very wise (Brahmin) orthodox man says, "Oh men, how did the Yadavas die in the past? Did Ravana spare anyone from his wrath? All Gods were encaged! Thereafter, did Rama not take over Lanka from Vanaras? Did the stones not float on the water? Similarly, the British will go down sometimes. Religion will be re-established. The Brahmins will be happy." Such was the discussion Brahmins hush-hushed after re-establishment of British rule in Maharashtra.' The Brahmins were hopeful that one day, the British would lose power and it would again come into the hands of Brahmins, and then religion would be re-established and the Brahmins would be happy.

It is very important to note that these were the feelings of Brahmins. After the British flag was unfurled at Pune, they colluded with some of the Brahmins. Honours such as Raobahadur and Sarbahadur were conferred upon some of the Brahmins. However, some Brahmins were neglected by the British and they began to express dissatisfaction on one pretext or the other. Vishnushastri Chiplunkar transformed this dissatisfaction into resentment against the British. He tried to rekindle national pride. Thereafter, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar joined Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. Prior to that riots took place amongst peasants during the famine of 1876. Vasudev Balwant Phadke began a revolt taking advantage of this situation. Against this backdrop, leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak proclaimed Self-Rule. The Brahmins were attracted towards the Self-Rule movement of Tilak, hoping that its power would come into their hands. Most of them did not comprehend the meaning of Tilak's movement. They interpreted it wrongly. Tilak was an extremist by ideology. But his followers were influenced by the above misinterpretation and became more extremist after Tilak's death. They started claiming to be the true followers of Tilak. Some of them became adherents of Hindutva and some went along with Mahatma Gandhi. Before this, when Balshashtri Jambhekar sponsored social reforms in 1840, the Brahmins attacked and persecuted him. When Lokhitwadi Deshmukh, the social reformer Agarkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the founder of Satyashodhak Samaj, started a movement against Brahmin hegemony, they were also persecuted by the latter. The motive was their hope of re-establishing Brahmin hegemony. The 'status-quoists' were obsessed with annihilating anything that was against the hegemony of the Brahmins in the hope of regaining their supremacy. The obsession continued for a long time.

After the advent of the British, many social upheavals took place and the Brahmins lost their control over the political and social arenas. The upper castes started losing control over society. These castes were confronted with a challenge. Issues of agriculture came to the fore and these issues occupied a prominent place in policy-making. In 1889, the British government invited Dr Olkar, an agricultural expert from Europe, to survey Indian agriculture. Dr Olkar blamed the ignorance of Indian farmers for the backwardness of the agricultural sector and recommended that agriculture be included in the educational curricula. If this subject was included in the curricula, then the education imparted to the middle classes would be greatly influenced and they would come to the fore in large numbers. Hence, Dr Olkar's recommendation was not implemented by the established class. Mahatma Phule insisted that the lower classes should get education. He also advocated inclusion of agriculture as a subject in the educational curricula. The government was spending more money on higher education and neglecting primary education, and this policy benefited mainly Brahmin children. This was the grievance raised by Mahatma

Phule. He demanded that schools should be opened for the downtrodden castes and primary education be made available in rural areas. In contrast, Lokmanya Tilak and Agarkar felt it was necessary to make educational facilities available at the secondary and college levels. These two great leaders stated in the Annual Report of the New English School of 1883, while advocating secondary and university education, that 'the downfall of India can be halted on the basis of religious, moral and scientific education'. By setting up secondary schools, Tilak and Agarkar ensured that children from the upper castes and upper classes received higher education. But those who could not secure jobs even after completing education and those who had lost their supremacy due to the change in power equations had become resentful. Lokmanya Tilak became a national leader and awakened the nationalist spirit amongst the people. He inspired his countrymen to rise against the British rulers. But during the time of his leadership the nationalist movement did not reach the interiors and rural areas. And the masses were not part of this movement. Thus his movement was limited as unrest in the urban and middle classes. The established upper class was losing power and control over the society. This process was strengthened in Maharashtra by the movement of the Satyashodhak Samaj. The urban middle class of the time thought that if they participated in the movement by Tilak and strengthened him, social change could be restrained and their dominance re-established. And so the middle classes belonging to the upper castes were attracted to Tilak. His followers were mainly from Maharashtra. It would be untrue if we say that this happened only because Tilak was from Maharashtra. It also happened due to the changing social and political situation. The middle class misinterpreted the politics of Tilak. They could not fathom the scope of his movement. That is why they interpreted the politics of Tilak as per their convenience. The upper castes thought that if Self-Rule was brought about by Tilak, then their social and political hegemony would not be disturbed. That is why the upper castes were sympathetic towards Tilak's movement and also participated in it. The great political leader Tilak died in 1920 and the growing spirit of national integration declined.

After Tilak's death, the second phase of the independence struggle started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi arrived on the horizon of Indian politics, the political and social atmosphere got a further impetus. Gandhiji attempted to change the total atmosphere of India both at the political and social levels. He adopted techniques and theory based on non-violence, truth, justice and peace. He had used these techniques as weapons in South Africa, and sought to use them to bring about change in the social and political situation of India. He strongly advocated social reformation and gave a new orientation to Indian social and political movements. It was only the Mahatma who understood the psyche of the Indian masses. The technique of his struggle was novel. He realized that

the Indian masses were peace-loving. He had the experience of South Africa. Before Tilak and Gandhiji too, there were many attempts at ousting the British from India. The first attempt of 1857 was significant. It was crushed by the British using military force. Mahatma Gandhi realized that the Revolt against the British empire needed a different strategy. Any armed revolt would not have been successful. The armed struggle required mass participation, which was not possible in India. Such a unity and moral and physical preparedness were lacking in the Revolt of 1857. Any similar attempt would have been crushed by the mighty British military force. By means of his moral strength, he decided to adopt the new technique of non-violence, *satyagraha* (insistence on truth), and prepared the Indian people for a revolt against British rule. He realized that the masses must feel the need for Self-Rule and hence he started involving the common masses in the national freedom movement. He also realized that the issues of survival of the common man had to be linked to the national freedom movement. He kindled the common man's hope for Self-Rule and thus started the politics of the common man.

Under his leadership, the freedom movement led by the Congress reached the grass-root level. Gandhiji's impact on politics was wide and strong because he had a specific philosophy behind this political movement which was spread to urban as well as rural India. He realized that a movement led by a specific class or caste would be unsuccessful, and hence he brought all classes and castes under the banner of the Congress.

This was lacking in Tilak's politics. The followers of Tilak had to struggle hard to keep up their political dominance. They hoped that after independence, political power would come back into their hands. But Gandhi's politics made them aware that it was not possible under the leadership of Gandhi. Tilak himself had accepted the importance of religion in politics. Hence, his followers started joining hands with the politics of Hindutva, in the name of Tilak. This class realized that if at all their hegemony in politics and the social arena was to remain intact, they must ensure that the thoughts of Gandhi, his philosophy and his techniques should not spread further. They always opposed Gandhiji's technique of non-cooperation. They never followed his philosophy, his universalist attitude, and sympathy towards all castes, creeds and poor people. They kept away from these streams and became staunch Hinduists. They kept themselves away from the struggle for independence. When Dr Shyamaprasad Mukherjee was Finance Minister in the Ministry of the Muslim League in Bengal during British rule, he wrote a letter to the British Governor (26 July 1942) supporting the British in their war efforts (i.e. the Second World War). At the same time, he informed the British how to suppress the growing impact of the Congress in Bengal. He wrote in his letter: 'During the period of war, any Government should prevent these revolutionary movements spreading in Bengal and supported by Congress. The question is how

to suppress the movement in Bengal. I am suggesting a measure whereby the movement led by Congress would fail and not become successful.' This was the letter sent by Dr Shyamaprasad Mukherjee to Sir John Herbert (quoted by Sumit Guha, 'Quit India Movement Opponents Unmasked', *Indian Express*, 17 August 1992). Dr Mukherjee was the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha during that period. The seeds of abstaining from the freedom movement can be proven in leaders like Dr Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, who warmed the British Governor when the Quit India Movement was spreading widely. The RSS, a proponent of Hinduism and Hindu nationalism, kept away from the freedom struggle. They never celebrate 15 August 1947 as the day of Independence. They call it a Day of Mourning. Even today they do not accept the Indian Constitution which is based on the principles of social, political and economic justice and equality. They propagate the idea of a religious nation rather than a republic. They have always preferred religion and religious discipline to control the political situation. During the period of Gandhiji's freedom struggle too, they stuck to their ideals. In short, they preferred to keep themselves away from Gandhiji's thoughts and his leadership, which, they thought, might create major difficulties or hurdles in their vision of Hinduism. When they realized that Gandhiji's techniques of non-violence, *satyagraha* and peaceful resistance were getting universal acceptance and were successful throughout India, they decided to finish Gandhiji and prepared a plan for his assassination.

To make this plan successful, a group became active in Maharashtra. It was led by followers of Tilak; all of them were from Maharashtra. In order to eliminate Gandhiji's political influence and his growing leadership, they started spreading hatred against him and against Muslim society. Then they started making statements that Gandhiji had a particular affection for Muslim society. In this way, the barrier between Hindus and Muslims was strengthened. They took advantage of the conflict between Hindus and Muslims over sharing political power, and misused the same for hatching a conspiracy against Gandhiji.

Gandhiji's secretary, Payrelal, has analysed the growing opposition against Gandhiji and his leadership in Maharashtra. He explained:

> Maharashtra is the stronghold of staunch and orthodox Brahmins. At the same time, there are patriots and activists who are the embodiments of devotion, dedication, strong patriotism and which are the ideals of the land of Maharashtra. Sometimes they are extremists, very committed to their cause, and they nurture their ideals even at the cost of the cause of the common people. This extreme idealism was totally alien to Gandhiji's philosophy and values. In the passage of time, the adherents of such an ideology felt that the legacy of Tilak was challenged by Gandhiji's philosophy. They felt that because of the dominating personality of Gandhiji, which was accepted universally, the image of Tilak was being dwarfed in the political field of

> India. As Gandhiji's image became larger than life and his popularity was spread wide rapidly, Hindutva forces experienced the shadow of darkness and despair. As a result, the Hindutva forces started a hate campaign against Gandhi and his philosophy. In spite of this, Gandhiji's struggle for Independence was widespread and successful all over India. Hindutva forces sunk deep into despair and frustration. Gandhiji became the hero of poor people and Hindutva forces could not digest this reality.[1]

This analysis of Pyarelal about the opposition to Gandhiji's ideology in Maharashtra strengthens my statement about Gandhiji.

In Maharashtra, all Brahmins were not against Gandhian philosophy and leadership. Many of them supported Gandhi and the social reform movement in Maharashtra. Many of them became staunch followers of Gandhiji. They sincerely supported Gandhiji in his political movement. Some of the Brahmins from Maharashtra contributed greatly to the social reform movement. However, it cannot be said that all Brahmins supported Gandhi. Some of them opposed him. It will be a simplification to say that the growing success of Gandhiji in his political struggle was the main cause for their opposition. Pyarelal was a follower of Gandhiji, but, in his analysis, he has purposefully avoided harsh comments against Hindutva forces. But it is a fact that they had been under great pressure and tension at the prospect of losing their political and social hold over Maharashtra. They feared losing their supremacy and their survival was at stake since Gandhiji's powerful image and popularity endangered their political and social control. They became his enemies. Gandhiji remained very kind and broad-minded in his personal life. He never behaved like an enemy or a friend towards anyone. In this regard, the followers of Tilak never showed a tendency to bury differences and unite for a common cause. They were only apparently following the legacy of Tilak. In the Tilak–Agarkar intellectual conflict, their language and behaviour were harsh and cruel. When Lokmanya Tilak had differences of opinion with Agarkar, he called him a 'dog on a grass-heap' in an article written by him in the *Kesari*. When a great leader like Tilak used such language against his opponent, then the followers of Tilak could only be expected to go beyond him in using abusive language. This is the reason why except for a few leaders, all activists and leaders of the Hindutva forces use abusive language against their opponents. Hindus always preferred conservative beliefs and stuck to their ideas at any cost. Gandhiji's thoughts and ideology were very clear, soft and humane. Gandhiji's humanitarian outlook reflected his personal perseverance and strength, because of which he earned respect and a place of honour in the hearts of the poor people of India. It was impossible for anybody to change the outlook of the masses. So the Hindutva forces planned to eliminate such a leader. They realized that it was impossible for the image of Tilak to overtake the image of Gandhiji; so

they decided to hatch a conspiracy against Gandhiji. It is very foolish to assume that Lokmanya Tilak would fade away behind the curtain of time because of Gandhi, and also to believe that Tilak would be forgotten. The contribution made by both Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi was great, and it will be recognized in the future also.

The right-wing Hindutva forces were always against the Congress Party and forces from Maharashtra were leading them. In other parts of the country too there were opponents of the Congress, but their opposition was not strong enough to have culminated in fanaticism. The anti-Congress forces outside Maharashtra did not attempt to murder Mahatma Gandhi. Sometimes the language used by opponents of the Congress in other parts of the country was harsh, but they did not go to the extent of planning to murder Gandhiji. In Pune, Hindutva forces had made attempts to murder Gandhiji from time to time. But did not Hindutva forces outside Maharashtra oppose Gandhiji's politics, arguing that he was appeasing Muslims, as was done by the Hindutva forces in Pune? Why did they not conclude that the politics of appeasement of Muslims would not come to an end unless Gandhiji was eliminated? There were several attempts to kill Gandhiji. Gandhiji himself had said that he came back from the jaws of death seven times. The Hindutva forces of Pune were involved in all these attempts. Because of Gandhiji's politics, the politics of the vested interests of Brahmins came to a halt. Mass politics came with Mahatma Gandhi's rise in Indian politics. And with this, the politics of Hindutva was restrained. The middle classes were annoyed and held a grudge against Gandhiji because of this. It is stated at the beginning of this chapter that the politics of Tilak suffered a serious setback on account of the rise of Mahatma Gandhi on the horizon of Indian politics. The seeds of efforts to eliminate Gandhiji were sown in these circumstances. And hence, the paths of Hindutva forces in Maharashtra and outside took different turns.

In Maharashtra, the great historian N.R. Phatak has given a very plausible explanation for this phenomenon. Although Mr Phatak was not a follower of Gandhiji and he cannot be seen as anti-Brahmin for he was a Brahmin, besides that he was a great historian. Hence, his analysis is very crucial. He explained:

> Pune became a politically important place because of the work of Mahadev Govind Ranade. Ranade went to Mumbai after two years of the entry of Tilak into politics in 1891 and Tilak became the sole spokesman of the politics. The conference of the Hindus in 1893, the leadership of the Sarvajanik Sabha are the landmarks of the ascendance of Tilak into politics. Gokhale was in Pune but he never supported religious politics. His politics did not take support of religion, sect, caste, reincarnation of God or godmen. The alliance of religion and the Brahmins is traditional. Tilak quarrelled with

> Bhandarkar, Telang and Agarkar on the issue of Consent Law as the protector of religion, and his status grew in great proportions. He maintained his supremacy by creating controversies like 'social conference should not be convened on the platform of Congress'. The target of Social Reforms was the Brahmin class. Brahmins did not like such Social Reforms Movement. It was, therefore, natural that the Brahmins gathered around Tilak when he opposed and criticized the leaders like Ranade and Bhandarkar. *It was not surprising that the Brahmin class believed their hegemony would remain intact once the Social Reforms Movement became history. At the level of district, taluka, mahal, the government officers, lawyers or doctors were all Brahmins. This class appreciated Tilak and stood behind him.* The majority of the common masses apprehended that they would be deprived of their political and economic benefits if they went behind the leaders, who did not think about the welfare of the masses. This was the result of the leadership of Tilak. Gandhiji's movement restrained the flow of such politics.[2]

This analysis of N.R. Pathak clarifies my stand that Hindutva forces were opposing Gandhiji.

Hindutva forces hated Gandhi and they still hate him. But it is not a personalized hatred. They hate Mahatma Gandhi on account of his ideology and hence it is hatred towards an ideology. Gandhiji's philosophy became an obstacle which prevented the spread of Hindutva politics. Hindutva forces were the products of the Peshwa regime. When the Maratha empire declined and British rule was established in Pune in 1818, the political power of the Brahmins was shattered. Under the leadership of Tilak, Hindutva forces experienced a new hope and confidence to regain their lost power. However, when Gandhiji's philosophy captured the imagination of the masses, Hindutva forces became frustrated and revolted violently against Gandhiji. Thereafter, Mumbai became the centre of political activities. However, hatred against Gandhiji was more visible in Pune than in Mumbai. If we study the political reasons behind it, we may observe that the Brahmins realized that they had a monopoly over political leadership, which had been in their hands since many years. As a result, they remained staunchly conservative Hindus and believed in caste superiority even after the end of the Peshwa regime. The centre of politics of Maharashtra shifted to Mumbai. Be it Hindus, Muslims or Parsis, everybody mingled with each other in Mumbai. Brahmins did not dominate the society the way they did in Pune. As a result, the hate campaign against Gandhiji's philosophy and leadership could not take roots in Mumbai. In Mumbai, the Brahmin groups were scattered. In fact, there was no group which fought for political power. In Mumbai, their position was very different. All Brahmins were not anti-Gandhians. Although leaders like Kelkar and Khaparde distanced themselves

from Gandhiji, many prominent Brahmins such as K.P Khadilkar, Shankarrao Deo, Kakasaheb Gadgil, Acharya Jawdekar and Acharya S.J. Bhagwat were influenced by Gandhiji. And that is why the advocates of Hindutva were greatly influenced by Gandhi. Many of them accepted the changing situation and threw themselves into the changing currents of thought. But some of them refused to change with time and became staunch advocates of Hindutva. They preferred to close their eyes and did not open their minds to new insights and to change. They kept away from the changing political developments. Gandhiji brought new waves of change into the political and social fabric of the country, but the conservative Brahmins continued to keep their eyes closed and wandered into darkness. They never had the spirit of sportsmanship to accept Gandhiji's philosophy or to challenge it according to the principles of fair play. Not having a powerful leadership after the death of Tilak, they lost energy even for their bare survival and hence, landed themselves in despair.[3] Muslim fanatics are as bad as Hindu fanatics because both are not ready to accept new thoughts and progress. Since the Hindutva forces were incapable of intellectually combating Gandhi and his philosophy, they resorted to the murder of the man himself. Historian N.R. Phatak has elaborated this. He says:

> However, when Gandhiji declared that he would not abandon his work till his last breath, his opponents found themselves in a great dilemma. He is not leaving politics and is also hopeful that he would live long. Many in Maharashtra thought that the only alternative was to kill him. The followers of Tilak in Maharashtra chose to remain aloof from the movement of Mahatma Gandhi or adopted an attitude of showing that they were with Gandhiji in times of prosperity but away from him during hard times. However, some of the activists from this class were afflicted with a disease of 'Gandhi Phobia' which rendered them obsessive about the thought of eliminating Gandhi.

In fact, Tilak and Gandhiji were true political leaders and sons of India. They struggled for independence and sacrificed their lives for it. After their death, their followers changed the track of their leaders. The Hindu fanatics misinterpreted Tilak. In fact, many of Gandhiji's movements found their origin in the movements of Tilak. This has been aptly observed by Acharya Jawadekar in his book *Lokmanya and Mahatma Gandhi*. He said:

> Those whoever are dissatisfied with the politics of Mahatma Gandhi for whatsoever reason, they all claimed to be the followers of Tilak. Those who do not want to use Khadi, those who do not like (the movement for) eradication of untouchability, those who do not like the efforts of Hindu–Muslim unity, and those who do not want to participate in the movements like Peace-

> ful Violation of Law or Non-Payment of Tax to the British Government, all such people can oppose these concepts under the pretext of Tilakism and such disgruntled Tilakists are many in number in Maharashtra.

The followers of Tilak never understood the depth of Gandhiji's philosophy and his political strategy. Tilak had carried the flag of the Indian freedom movement to a level from which Gandhiji carried it further and developed the concepts of humanity, *swadeshi*, non-cooperation and Hindu–Muslim unity. All these factors were part of Tilak's political ideology also. Gandhiji spread the Non-Cooperation Movement throughout India. Tilak had aroused the feelings of '*swarajya*' (self-rule). He ignited the fire of unrest in the hearts of the masses and Gandhiji supplemented it with '*satyagraha*' and moral strength which gave courage to the common man to fight against the British empire. These unique concepts and values of Gandhiji shook the foundation of the British empire. The British had conquered 700 princely states and their kings. It was after that the concept of a nation was born and it was thereafter, under the leadership of the Congress, that the movement for Independence was started. Gandhiji awakened the souls of the Indian masses and transformed the freedom struggle into a mass movement. He received a great response and support from all over India, and the freedom struggle spread like wild fire. This was the most historical and challenging event in the political history of India. The greatness of Mahatma Gandhiji and his powerful ideology was understood and realized by none other than Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, who on 6 July 1944 declared Gandhiji as *Rashtrapita* (Father of the Nation). The British empire was ready to hand over political power to 700 princely states, but Gandhiji strongly opposed that and determined to free the country from the clutches of British rule. This is why he was called the Father of the Nation. Only the Sangh Parivar and other similar organizations which shied away from the freedom struggle under his leadership were not ready to call him the Father of the Nation.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale accepted Gandhiji as his political mentor. He was impressed by Gandhiji's ideals and morality. The philosophical foundation of Gandhiji's politics was based on morality and character, loyalty and devotion. Conditioning of the mind, control over emotions and commitment to one's work were very important ingredients of Gandhi's political ideology. It agreed that one should not sacrifice morality and purity even when faced by another person's misdemeanour. Gandhiji always preferred patience, peace and perseverance. He always started his political moves by giving advance information to his opponents. He always preached the values of morality and devotion to his followers. Gandhiji's outlook was very different while launching the freedom struggle involving *hartal* (strike), agitation, perseverance and patience. These were the weapons of a non-violent struggle. Gandhiji alluded

to the *Bhagvad Gita*. He believed in truthfulness and loyalty to service and devotion to work, whether at the personal or the national level.

Tilak's ideology was based on the principle of 'tit for tat'. He believed that if the enemy did not follow morality, then one should not insist on morality. On the contrary, Gandhi insisted on purity of means. A curious question can be asked as to how Gandhiji appreciated the diplomacy of Shri Krishna, which does not fit into the definition of purity of means advocated by himself. For example, Shri Krishna held his hand over the sun and caused darkness. According to the then laws of war, the battle of the day had ended and thereafter Sri Krishna removed his hand and thus played a trick. This kind of tactics is not allowed by the principle of purity of means. Gandhiji never supported such diplomacy because in his practice, the means were as important as the ends. Shri Krishna might be the first communist in the world in the eyes of Gandhiji. Gandhiji studied the *Bhagvad Gita* and interpreted it differently for devising his own techniques of *satyagraha*, non-violence, truth and compassion. Thus the Indian freedom struggle came to be known worldwide. In this respect, Gandhiji's techniques were totally different as compared to others in the world. Due to his techniques of *satyagraha* and non-violence, he became successful in his political struggle and received universal acclaim. Tilak's political outlook was very different. His politics mainly benefited the middle classes. As against this, Gandhiji focused on the problems of farmers, labourers, harijans, poor people, men and women, irrespective of caste or class. He applied the universal principles of compassion, humanity and peace to India's freedom struggle also. He roused national consciousness and prepared the battleground for fighting against the British empire. From urban to rural areas, from upper classes to lower classes, he changed the thinking pattern of the masses and proved his moral as well as spiritual strength.

Tilak never approved of social revolution and he refused to change with the times. He believed in caste superiority. In this respect, Brahmins were influenced by Tilak and secured good positions in the British government by virtue of their education. At the same time, British rule challenged the political power of Tilak and his followers. When Gandhiji arrived on the Indian political scene these Brahmins faced the wrath of the social reformers, and they understood that the social reform movement and Gandhiji's popularity would endanger their social and political supremacy. Many middle-class people kept themselves away from Gandhiji's movement. However, the poor people including Harijans (the nomenclature conferred by Gandhi upon the untouchables) in India were attracted towards Gandhiji's political leadership. Brahmins always supported Hindutva forces and thought about their own welfare and political power first; hence, their activities were always self-centred. They never approved of the policy of equality in the social and political arenas.

In this connection, Tilak's speech given on 1 November 1917 is very

remarkable. He said, 'Can farmers plough the fields in Vidhansabha; can a tailor use his scissors in politics; and whether a businessman can use his techniques of marketing in Vidhan Sabha?' One can see what Tilak thought about farmers, workers and lower-class people.

On 29 March 1918, in Mumbai, the first meeting of activists working for eradication of untouchability was organized. In this meeting, Tilak said that he was present not as the editor of the *Kesari*, but in his individual capacity. Karmaveer Vitthal Ramji Shinde has described the proceedings of this meeting in his book, *Religion, Life and Philosophy*: 'Tilak had said that Peshawas also drank water carried by untouchables. I will never approve a God who approves untouchability.' Karmaveer recollects that there was a thunderous applause in the meeting at this sentence of Tilak. In order to eradicate untouchability, a resolution was passed and Karmaveer went to Tilak for obtaining his signature. But he was hesitant and requested him to wait for a few days until he came back from his foreign tour. When he returned on 1 December 1919, he had to face the anger of the progressive elements and the non-Brahmin movement. Due to this, there was an opposition to giving Tilak a letter of honour at Pune. Karmaveer Shinde has narrated these incidents in order to give an example of how Tilak was orthodox and why Hindutva elements became his followers. They thought that if Tilak's movement brought about political changes and if '*swarajya*' were established, Brahmin hegemony would be re-established. These were also the feelings of the common masses.

But after the rise of Gandhiji in Indian politics, the freedom struggle became widespread and appealed to all castes. The hopes of Brahmins were shattered. Smt. Nalini Pandit has written in her book, *Caste and Class Struggle*:

> . . . the great leader, Tilak, also preferred caste superiority and he never overcame the mentality of middle class. Only educated, cultured and urban people were involved in his political movement. The National Congress and political leaders like Tilak practised untouchability and caused dissatisfaction amongst the common masses. This so-called Radical Nationalist Party also emphasized the contemporary political issues and appeased the upper castes and the middle class. It neglected the hopes and aspirations of the majority of the masses. They also opposed the demand of equality put forth by 'Satyashodhak Samaj' because of which the feelings of the non-Brahmins were hurt. By refusing to sign the manifesto of eradicating untouchability, Tilak invited the wrath of the untouchable leaders. He supported the Khots (the landlords and moneylenders) and lost the sympathies of farmers in the matter of the Land Tenancy Act. Due to all these negative factors, a leader like Tilak, who was a strong man, a determined fighter, a great patriot and a person who sacrificed his entire life for the Freedom Movement, was

> respected but could not get required support of the common masses in Maharashtra.

This kind of dilemma continued even after Tilak, and the followers of Tilak, hailing from this typical middle class, remained orthodox and considered opposition to Gandhian politics their sacred duty.

The vested interests of the middle classes were endangered because of Gandhian ideology. But his movement was spreading like wildfire. Therefore, the Hindutva forces became restless and started treating Gandhi as their enemy number one. The Sangh leadership did not have the capacity to start an independent freedom movement to overcome the influence of Gandhi, and hence the Sangh never participated in the freedom struggle. The Hindutva forces did not have an ideology for safeguarding the interests of the common man. Gandhi claimed himself to be an orthodox Hindu and yet the Hindutva forces propagated that he was appeasing Muslims with malafide intentions of opposing Gandhian politics. However they could not convince the masses that Gandhi was appeasing Muslims. The common man cares for honesty and sincerity, which are lacking in the politics of the Hindutva forces. Gandhiji had realized, like Tilak, that the British could not be driven out of India until and unless Hindus and Muslims united and struggled, and hence, like Tilak again, Gandhi also tolerated some defects of the Muslims. This cannot be said to be an appeasement of Muslims and if the allegation of appeasement of Muslims is made against Gandhi, Tilak also cannot escape this allegation.

Mahatma Gandhi staunchly opposed the partition of the country and the country now knows that the partition did not take place because of him. The Gandhian period is very recent. There are people living who have seen Gandhiji and who participated in his movements, and some of them had close relations with him. The politics of Gandhi was witnessed by so many people and therefore it shows political ignorance to assume that the country was partitioned because of him. India was not divided because of Gandhi. The seeds of partition were sown long before the rise of a man named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. India's partition was a critical issue from 1888, when Lord Dufferin was the Viceroy of the British empire in India. Thereafter, in 1909, the principle of separate constituencies was announced for Muslims and that was the beginning of the division of this country! Gandhiji tried to uproot the poison ivy of partition. But he was isolated and was not successful in his attempt. If there was anyone in this country who was capable of stopping the partition, it was only Gandhiji, but he was not successful. The entire country is to be blamed for his failure. If he was convinced that the nation was ready to fight the partition, he would have definitely stopped the process. Gandhiji was the only leader who was against the partition, till the end.

Partition and Gandhiji

'Divide and Rule' had been the political policy of the British government right from the beginning. The seeds of partition lie in this policy, as well as the hatred between the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. Their religious conflicts were also responsible for it. Congress leaders are also to be blamed for their wrong statements and egotistic behaviour, which was also a cause of intra-group conflicts. The first freedom struggle that took place in 1857 was a sequel to the farmers' revolt of 1763. Both struggles were organized on the basis of Hindu–Muslim unity. Therefore, the British decided to divide Hindus and Muslims. In 1905, Lord Curzon declared the partition of Bengal and used the policy of divide and rule to break the Hindu–Muslim unity in Bengal. This was strongly opposed by both Hindus and Muslims. Lord Curzon had informed the Minister for India about the partition but kept it a top secret otherwise, and after getting political approval, he declared it on 19 July 1905. On 16 October 1905, Bengal was actually divided. At that time, the population of Bengal was 8 crores – 4 crores and 30 lakhs were Bengalis, and 2 crores 10 lakhs were from Bihar and Orissa. If the huge province of Bengal had been divided on the basis of language and for its political administration, the partition would not have been opposed by anybody. However, the partition was a political plan and Hindu–Muslim disunity was its target. Fortunately, this plan of Bengal's partition was unsuccessful because Hindus and Muslims resented it strongly. The British realized the need to divide this unity to maintain their political power; as the rulers, they decided to strengthen the policy of divide and rule and to make it more effective in the future.

Lord Dufferin had realized the threat of Hindu–Muslim unity long before Bengal's partition. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was established as a political party. Lord Dufferin studied the policies, principles and practices of the Congress for three years, and found that it was dominated by Hindus while Muslim members were very few. In 1888, he declared that India consisted of two nations, one of Hindus and the other of Muslims. Thus the seeds of partition were sown much earlier. After the establishment of the Congress, there were small streams of Muslims who resorted to politics on the basis of religion, and there were also Hindus who resorted to religious politics. Barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who is credited with the title of Father of Pakistan, was an advocate of united India till 1940. He was against the Muslim League. He had not even become a member of the Muslim League. He was of the opinion that the League was politically backward (see Madhu Limaye, *Swantrya Chalvaleechee Vichardhara*).

Jinnah was trying to bring Muslims into the mainstream politics of Indian nationalism. In 1916, at Lucknow, in the session of the Muslim League, he proclaimed:

> India is on the way to becoming a powerful nation of Hindus and Muslims. A new and strong process has come into existence to make an India (Hindustan) consisting of different races, religions and castes. Muslims should not think of their selfish interests. All seven crore Muslims should become bold and participate in the creation of national unity by working hard to prove that they are involved with their bodies, minds and ideology. ('Jinnah, An Ambassador of Unity')

In those days, a Congress representative participated in the sessions of the Muslim League and a representative of the League participated in Congress sessions. In 1917, Mohammed Ali Jinnah was present in the Congress session. In his speech, he said that

> due to the majority of votes in the legislatures, the Hindus cannot force their political power over Muslims. It is baseless to argue that Hindus will think about their political power but they will always support Muslims because they are in minority. The ghost of Hindu-hegemony is a creation of your enemies who are trying to create rift between the two communities. Their intention is that Muslims should not participate in the Freedom Struggle along with Hindus. If you do not desire to have a Hindu State, I will say in the same vein that we do not want a Muslim State also. In any condition, we do not want a British State. The power must be transferred. ('Jinnah, An Ambassador of Unity', pp. 160–66).

Up till 1940, Mohammed Ali Jinnah was fighting for Hindu–Muslim unity. In 1940, at Lahore, in the Muslim League session, a demand for a separate Pakistan as a Muslim nation was made for the first time. One of the reasons often given for this change in Jinnah's outlook is that he wanted to lead the Indian people. But with the entry of Gandhiji into the politics of India, the leadership went to Gandhiji. Jinnah suspected that Gandhiji earned popularity by appealing to the religious sentiments of the people and the dream of Mohammed Ali Jinnah was shattered. He was an ambitious man and also an egotist. Out of frustration, he determined to become the leader of Muslims, on par with Gandhi, if he were not able to become the leader of the whole country. The rise of Gandhi and his growing popularity constituted a pain in the neck for the political ambition of Barrister Jinnah.

The patriotic freedom fighter Shri V.D. Savarkar wrote in his first book in English that the Muslims were as staunchly nationalist as the Hindus during the freedom struggle of 1857. The policy of divide and rule adopted by British rulers affected both. The Muslim League also became a victim of this policy. They deemed as traitors those whom they had termed patriots only till yesterday. This is why Savarkar said, while delivering the presidential address at the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Ahmedabad in 1937, 'We cannot afford

to commit a mistake to assume that Hindustan is a united country today. On the contrary, we must admit that there are mainly two nations – Hindu and Muslim, in this country' (Shankar Ramchandra Date, *History of the Work of the Maharashtra Hindu Mahasabha*). Shankar Ramchandra Date, also known as Mamarav Date, was a staunch follower of Savarkar. These lines are very much from his book!

It is falsely propagated that Gandhi was responsible for the partition. Gandhiji's humanitarian approach towards Muslims was the incidental cause behind such propaganda. Therefore, the common man has started to believe that it is true. It is very necessary to understand Gandhiji's role in the partition. This must be discussed and evaluated with a political and social approach. There are similarities between the role of Hindutva forces, Muslim fundamentalists and Barrister Jinnah. Before evaluating Gandhiji's approach towards the partition, we must understand the differences between the two religious leaders. Gandhiji was called 'Mahatma' (a Great Soul). But the leader of the Muslim League, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, refused to call him 'Mahatma'. However, when Jinnah agreed to discuss partition with Gandhiji on 5 August 1944, he issued a statement to newspaper editors wherein he called Gandhiji 'Mahatma'. It shows the common tendency prevailing amongst Hindutva forces and leaders like Jinnah. When the BJP came to power in 1991, it refused to recognize Gandhi as 'Mahatma' and the Father of the Nation. However, when BJP was born, it accepted Gandhism. This is opportunistic religious politics. In order to avoid the partition of India, Gandhiji submitted a Nine Points scheme to the Viceroy. It was as under:

1. Jinnah may be given an alternative to form his Cabinet.
2. Jinnah may be given all the powers to select his Ministers in the Cabinet. The selected Cabinet Ministers may be all Muslims, or non-Muslims, or may represent all classes, castes and creeds.
3. Congress Party would cooperate and support Jinnah if he maintained a comprehensive approach for the welfare of all Indians.
4. Lord Mountbatten would be the final authority to decide which matters are to be given priority for the welfare of the Indian people.
5. The Muslim League and Jinnah would make necessary efforts to maintain peace and security all over India.
6. In such a framework, Jinnah would formulate his concept of a separate Pakistan before transfer of power.
7. There would be no private Army or National Guard.
8. Even if the Congress secured a majority in the legislatures, it would not use this majority against the Muslim League. The Cabinet formed by the League would propose schemes for the welfare of all Indians and the Congress would support all such schemes.

9. If this proposal was not acceptable to Jinnah, the same proposal would be put forth before the Congress as an alternative.

The Viceroy appreciated the terms and conditions of the proposal, and he advised Gandhi to discuss it with the Army Chief, Lord Ismay, so that he could give it the necessary technical shape. From this one can imagine to what extent Mahatma Gandhi went in putting up the above proposal before Jinnah in order to avoid partition. Mahatma Gandhi had supported the Rajaji scheme. In that scheme, the principle of direct partition was not implied. It had lots of ifs and buts. Hence, it is necessary to understand the Rajaji scheme first. It was as under:

1. The Muslim League would give approval to the demand of Hindi freedom if the conditions mentioned hereinafter about the constitution of independent India were met, and it would cooperate with the Congress for establishment of government during the transit period.
2. After the end of the war, there would be a committee for reorganizing the adjoining districts having majority of Muslim population in North-West and North-East India. Accordingly, a decision would be taken about secession from India by adult franchise or other practical methods in the reorganized areas. If it was decided by a majority to establish a sovereign state, the districts along the borders would have freedom to join either of the States.
3. All the parties can submit their choices before taking the referendum.
4. If it was decided to be separate, then both the Nations could enter into an agreement on subjects like Defence, Trade, Transport and other essential matters.
5. The exchange of population would depend upon the wishes of the respective people.
6. If the British government were to give complete independence and if the responsibility of the affairs of Hindustan were transferred, then only all these conditions would be binding on all the parties.

On 17 April Rajaji wrote a letter to Mohammed Ali Jinnah referring to these arrangements, and on 30 June he informed Jinnah that Gandhi had supported this proposal. On 2 July Jinnah informed Rajaji about his refusal to these conditions. If the partition were to take place on that day as per Rajaji's scheme, there was no reason for Jinnah to refuse. On 30 July Jinnah placed Rajaji's scheme before a committee of the Muslim League. In the said committee, Jinnah said:

> Gandhiji should give his unconditional consent for the demand of Pakistan and join hands with the League. Then only the independence of Hindi people will be nearer. No independence will be possible without the unanimity

> between Hindus and Muslims. The scheme of Rajaji envisages a debilitated Pakistan, and such a debilitated and weak Pakistan is being given to us by Gandhi. By placing this scheme, Gandhi and Rajaji are putting the cart before the horse. This scheme can be implemented only if the British transfer their power. Therefore, it is not possible for the Muslim League to accept the scheme.[4]

This means that Rajaji's scheme, which was supported by Gandhiji, was refused straightaway by Jinnah. Therefore, the claim of Hindutva forces that the partition took place because Gandhiji supported Rajaji's scheme is baseless. Moreover, Jinnah did not agree even to the Nine Points scheme placed before him by Gandhi himself with the intention of avoiding the partition. These two incidents prove that Gandhiji did not agree to partition but, on the contrary, suggested different alternatives to Jinnah in order to avoid partition.

Gandhiji pleaded repeatedly with Jinnah that he should not insist on the formation of Pakistan by taking away some parts of the country. He said that he should look after the affairs of the country assuming that it was Pakistan itself. He could become Prime Minister. He could form a Cabinet of the Muslim League. He could form his Cabinet as per his own wish, but he should desist from demanding a separate Pakistan. He was not doing this in order to appease Muslims; it is proved from all these facts that Gandhiji was ready to pay whatever price was required for keeping the country united.

However, Hindutva forces are not ready to take into consideration these incidents and only blame Gandhiji for the partition. Gandhiji informed Rajaji of the details of the discussion he had with Jinnah. Gandhiji told Rajaji:

> Jinnah not only treated your scheme scornfully but also said that it was your (Rajaji's) unwanted interference. I (Gandhiji) told Jinnah that I was supporting the scheme of Rajaji. You should accept this scheme and name the country as Pakistan. When Jinnah started to talk about the Resolution of Lahore (Resolution of Demand for Pakistan), I told him that we should talk about the scheme of Rajaji instead of that Resolution. You may point out the shortcomings existing in the said scheme. But Jinnah was not willing to agree to any of these solutions.

While narrating the further part of the discussion, Gandhi said: 'He wants Pakistan right now. Not after independence.' If the partition was to be done, the leaders of India and Jinnah would decide after mutual negotiations. Rajaji's scheme opposed the concept of transfer of power after the partition of India. Jinnah was insisting that India and Pakistan must be given independence simultaneously.

Gandhi tried persuading Jinnah to be unanimous on the solutions and to put it before the British government for their approval. Gandhiji emphasized

to Jinnah that he himself was not in favour of the proposal that the British should formulate the scheme of partition. He said that he would never tell the British that the partition proposed by them should be binding on Indians. However, Jinnah insisted that the Congress should agree to a separate Pakistan. He wanted an undiluted Pakistan. Gandhiji even suggested to Jinnah that

> there are no two opinions about your leadership of Muslim League which is the largest organization of the Muslims. But it does not mean that all the Muslims in India want Pakistan. You may take Referendum in those parts which you want to be included in Pakistan and that will decide how many people want Pakistan.

Jinnah was not agreeable even to this. These were the minutes of the discussion that took place on the first day. This discussion also proves that Gandhiji was not ready for partition. In spite of this, it has been a part of the propaganda campaign of the Hindutva forces for so many years to say that partition was caused by Gandhi.

The kind of history being taught in schools and colleges and the ignorance of the masses about history have resulted in poisonous hatred against Muslims in the minds of the Indian people. The Hindutva forces feel that such propaganda is a must if the march of Gandhian ideology is to be halted. They do not care even if the truth were murdered. This is the ideology of Hindutva forces. This is the reason why they propagate that Gandhi was responsible for the partition.

The ideologies of Gandhi and Swami Vivekanand were similar since they wanted to keep the India united. Vivekananda also said,

> it is not proper that the castes should quarrel among themselves. It cannot achieve welfare of anybody. Such quarrels will lead us to division, we will be weak economically and we will go down into the murk of poverty. The days are permanently over of birthrights and special privileges. It must be conceded that it is a boon of the British administration in India. The Muslim administrators should also be given credit for destroying the caste-based privileges. In a way, their rules were not entirely bad. Nothing is bad or good in all respects. *The conquest of India by Muslims resulted in upliftment of the poor and down-trodden. This is the reason why one-fifth of us became Muslims. It has not happened only because of the swords. It is utterly absurd to say that all this (conversions) took place on the strength of the swords and guns.*[5]

If it is said that Gandhi appeased Muslims, then what can be said about Swami Vivekananda who has made such statements about Muslims?

Hindutva forces claim that Mahatma Gandhi appeased the Muslims. In order to substantiate this claim, they say that Gandhiji was asking for Jinnah

to be made Prime Minister and the Muslim League to be allowed to form the Cabinet. However, Lokmanya Tilak also did not have a different approach than Gandhi's. On the contrary, Gandhiji took the thoughts of Tilak forward. An example of this is the speech given by Lokmanya Tilak in support of the Lucknow Pact. He said:

> We are to fight the foreign government. We must settle the quarrels amicably amongst us if the struggle is to be successful. We must unitedly demand freedom by resolving all our differences of castes, religions or whatever. While doing this, we should not object if the Muslims got more privileges or even if the Muslims and/or any other castes in India were given more privileges by the British. I have executed this Agreement (Lucknow Pact) with the sole intention that the British must go from Hindustan and the nation must be free.

Mahatma Gandhi was not the only one who advocated Hindu–Muslim unity. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade had also put forward the same approach. He said:

> Unless Hindus and Muslims come together, the progress and prosperity of India is impossible. We must remember this lesson from the past history of India. The great Muslim Emperor Akbar and his advisers have shown us the way and we must follow that. We should not commit the mistakes which were committed by his great-grandson, the last Emperor of Muslims, Aurangzeb.

This reality was understood by Mahadev Govind Ranade when Gandhiji had not even entered the politics of India.

Efforts towards spreading the poison of communal hatred were being made even before the independence of India, and that was the real reason for partition. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia has said,

> Fanaticism of Hindutva forces was one of the reasons for partition. To oppose partition after it has already taken place is like a murderer saying after committing murder that he does not approve of it. One thing must be kept in mind, that the Jan Sangh which proclaims loudly about united India, and its predecessors which advocated a corrupt concept of Hinduism, have in fact assisted the British and the Muslim League in partitioning the country. These people (Hindutva forces) have never tried to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims.[6]

The Hindutva forces make a hue and cry about a united India, but what did they do to oppose partition? Why did they not undertake an agitation using whatever strength they had? The RSS does not even have the moral right to

speak about a united India because they never took part in the freedom struggle, let alone participate in the struggle against partition.

India got independence even after partition. The partition is unfortunate. It is a product of the politics of the British, Hindutva forces and the Muslim League. Those who observe Independence Day as a Day of Mourning have no right to speak about this country. And why should they blame Gandhi for the partition? The right to blame Gandhi may be conceded to those organizations which participated in the freedom struggle or those organizations which agitated against partition. As it is, Jinnah was also a supporter of a united India till 1940. Then why did he become an advocate of Pakistan? We have to undertake self-introspection. Sir Mohammad Iqbal started impressing upon Jinnah the need for the formation of one or two States out of the Provinces with a Muslim majority after reorganizing the Provinces, once the elections of 1937 were over. Of course Jinnah hesitated to go forward in haste, in case the Congress formed a united Cabinet along with the League after the elections of 1937. Jinnah may not have gone to the extent of passing a Resolution for Pakistan. Iqbal had put forth the idea of Pakistan in 1930. But Jinnah was doubtful about it. Iqbal's idea of Pakistan was based on religion.

Iqbal wanted to have a separate Pakistan for protecting and safeguarding Islam and *shariyat*. With such a religions approach, Iqbal put forth the theory of Two Nations. Even on 11 August 1947, when Jinnah delivered a speech in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, he did not mention the idea of Pakistan. In fact he did not utter the word 'Islam' in his entire speech. He did not mention the revival of Islam. He advised the Constituent Assembly members to forget the past and to build their new nation without interference of religion. He advised that they should not allow religious differences to interfere in the task of nation-building and that they should encourage common citizenship keeping religion only at the individual level.[7] This is emphasized here to show that these were the thoughts of Jinnah even after the creation of Pakistan. And, prior to 1940, he was a supporter of a united India. Why did Jinnah change his mind and go to the extent of asking for a separate Pakistan? It would be useful even today to answer this question. It may also be useful for changing the atmosphere prevailing today in India when we are entering the twenty-first century.

In fact, Jinnah was not very clear about the formation of a separate Pakistan. He was interrogated by Gandhiji on the idea of Pakistan during a discussion. But Jinnah could not explain to Gandhiji the idea of Pakistan and how it should come to be. He was only insisting upon Gandhiji's support for the concept of Pakistan. Gandhiji noted,

> The propaganda of the Muslim League about Pakistan was negative. A cari-

> cature of Pakistan was not drawn up even by people belonging to the Muslim religion or by those who supported the idea of Pakistan. It was never made clear what would be the geography of Pakistan. If such an attempt was made, lakhs of Muslims would not have taken interest in it. This is the reason why the picture of Pakistan was not clearly drawn up before the partition.[8]

The Muslim League passed a Resolution for Pakistan in its session of 1940 at Lahore. Thereafter, on 16 April 1941, Dr Rajendra Prasad suggested in a representation that Jinnah should elaborate his idea of Pakistan. He appealed to him to submit a proposal so that the Congress could think over it. Jinnah declared that the partition should be agreed upon as a principle. After discussing the issue with Jinnah, Gandhiji was of the opinion that Jinnah wanted to compromise, but there was no clarity in his mind about a compromise proposal. Gandhi insisted that Rajaji's scheme was a good compromise. He told this to Rajaji also. Gandhiji was of the opinion that the British should first leave the country. Peace would not be there in the country unless the British left. He said that once the British leave, we would decide our own fate. The basis of the solution suggested by Rajaji was that the Muslim League should support a united India; Gandhiji was of the same opinion. He was of the opinion that the British should not divide India, and if at all it were to be divided, we Indians should do it.

However, because of the trick played by the Congress during the United Cabinet's formation of the Ad-hoc Government in 1937, Jinnah, who was ambitious, lost faith in the Congress. It so happened that a resolution was passed by the Working Committee in the Congress session on 6 July 1946, wherein the concept of Ad-hoc Government was approved. But the President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, convened a press conference in Bombay on 10 July 1946 and said that 'the Congress will enter into the National Government without having any binding of any treaty. The Congress will be free to adopt a policy as the time demands. Congress has agreed only to take part in the Constituent Assembly. It will have right to make necessary changes in the scheme of Cabinet Mission.' Jinnah was disturbed by this statement. The Cabinet Mission scheme had been approved by both the Muslim League and the Congress. The Congress did not have the right to make changes in it. Nehru's statement caused great damage. From then on Jinnah decided to distance himself from the Congress, and he became more and more adamant. The then retiring President of the Congress, Maulana Azad, has said in his book *India Wins Freedom* that

> the statement of Jawaharlal was wrong. It was not correct to say that Congress was free to make whatever changes in the scheme. In fact, we had also approved the principle of having the constitution based on federal system.

> We (Congress) had agreed that three portfolios were to be kept reserved for the Central Government and the rest will be with the provincial governments.

It was also decided to divide the provinces into A, B and C groups. Congress was not empowered to make changes in any of the clauses without the permission of the other parties. The said statement was like a bombshell for Jinnah.

Immediately after Nehru's statement, Jinnah declared that it was necessary to rethink the entire situation. He asked Liaquat Ali Khan to convene a meeting of the Council of the League. Jinnah even published a statement in this regard. He said in the statement:

> The Muslim League has approved the Cabinet Mission Scheme because it was also accepted by the Congress and assuming that the future constitution of the country would be based on that. But Congress President has declared his intention to make desired changes in the Cabinet Mission scheme on the strength of his majority in the Constituent Assembly. This means that the future of the minorities will depend on the whims of the majority community.

Jinnah misinterpreted Nehru's statement to mean that the Congress had not agreed to the Cabinet Mission scheme and since the League had accepted the said scheme, Jinnah suggested that the Viceroy should invite the League to form the government. On 27 July a meeting of the Council of the Muslim League was convened. While addressing the Council, Jinnah said, 'Now there is only one alternative left for the League and that is to demand a separate Pakistan again.' After three days of deliberations, the Muslim League passed a resolution disagreeing with the Cabinet Mission scheme which had been once accepted by it. Jinnah declared his resolution to undertake a *satyagraha* for securing Pakistan.

If we take into consideration this incident, we can understand why Mahatma Gandhi told Jayaprakash Narayan at Panchgani that 'Jawaharlal shattered my dream of United India'. It was because Vallabhbhai Patel had first given approval to partition on the basis of his experience of the Ad-hoc Government. In spite of this, Gandhi said that Nehru shattered his dream and the reason for the same must have been the statement issued by Nehru at the press conference of 10 July. Minoo Masani, one of the members of the Constituent Assembly, said in an interview given to the Press Trust of India on 14 November 1988, that Maulana Azad saying that Nehru's statement caused the partition is true. Masani has said that Azad's claim that some statements of Nehru caused partition is hundred per cent true, and Masani reminded that he had mentioned it in his book, *Bliss Was it in that Dawn*. Since the statements of Maulana Azad have been published after the death of Nehru, it will never

be known what Nehru had to say about the same; in what context Nehru must have made these statements and what were the reasons. Or whether the said statement was made without bothering about its consequences? However, the Congress Working Committee had to face a dilemma because of Nehru's statement. If the Congress Working Committee says that the authentic opinion of the Congress was the resolution passed by the Congress General Assembly, then a question of the prestige of the President of the party would have arisen; and if it did not say so, it meant that the General Assembly supported the said statement. The Congress was caught in a dilemma. If it refuted the statement of its President, then the image of Congress organization would have been damaged, and if the Cabinet Mission scheme was refused, then the country would have to face damages. Hence the Committee finally passed the following resolution:

> the Committee regrets that the Muslim League council has changed its earlier decision and passed resolution not to co-operate with the Constituent Assembly. The time is to oust the foreign rulers and to adopt a policy of self-reliance as soon as possible. At the same time, we have very difficult and far-reaching political and economic issues before us and it is necessary to have the co-operation of the people of the country and their representatives for solving these issues. If such a co-operation is available, then only the transition will be easy and useful. The Committee is aware of the fact that there are many differences in the tendencies and objectives of the Congress and the League. Even then, the Committee appeals that those who intend to achieve the independence and the welfare of the nation, they should co-operate and make efforts to solve many questions faced by the nation in the interest of the overall welfare of the nation and obtaining independence for the people of India. The Muslim League is criticizing that the Congress has accepted the scheme mentioned in the statement of 16 May conditionally. The Committee has taken cognizance of the same. The Committee wishes to clarify here that even if some of the clauses were not agreeable to us, even then, we have accepted the scheme in totality. The Committee assumes that if there are some contradictions or shortcomings in the scheme, it is possible to rectify them while implementing the scheme in practice. The Resolution of 26 June 1946 has been passed with the intention that the work of Constituent Assembly be fruitful. It is apparent that the said Resolution must be implemented in practice. We are taking up the task of Constituent Assembly with such a determination. However, Jinnah has not approved this Resolution. He says that the statement of Nehru is the true opinion of the Congress. *If the Congress could change its policy so many times before the power has come into its hand and while the British Rule were in existence, then how should the minorities convince themselves that the Congress would not*

> *changes its decision and accept the opinions of Nehru after the British left the country?* [9]

Before all this happened, Gandhi told Jinnah:

> I am ready to support the demand of Pakistan if I were convinced that the welfare of the people will be achieved after the creation of Pakistan or that the creation of Pakistan is in the interest of Islam. But the demand which has been made by the Muslim League is violating Islam and it is an impure demand which has been made with malafide intentions. I have no doubts about it in my mind. I am convinced about it. Islam teaches the philosophy of unity. The ideology of Islam is of brotherhood. The philosophy of Islam does not divide society of human beings. Those who want partition of India, they are not only the enemies of India but they are also the enemies of Islam. They can partition my body but they cannot compel me to accept what I feel is non-acceptable.

What can be a more extreme opinion opposing partition? Gandhi said,

> the question whether to create Pakistan or not, arises only after India obtains independence. No other questions arise before India's independence. United India is the only alternative to the demand of Pakistan. Once the principle of partition was accepted, it would open a Pandora's box of problems. In my opinion, the Congress should not become a party to the partition. I have persuaded them, even by procrastinating myself before them, to convince me that the demand of Pakistan is good and proper. The supporters of Pakistan should put forth their scheme before the people and convince the people how it will be beneficial to them.

This was Gandhiji's stand.

In the letter written to Mountbatten, Gandhiji informed him that he had consistently opposed the demand of Pakistan throughout the discussions he had had with Jinnah. It will be premature to conclude that Gandhiji had approved partition from the fact that he had approved the scheme of Rajaji. Jinnah also opposed Rajaji's scheme tooth and nail. If the underlying principle of Rajaji's scheme was partition, then there was no reason why Jinnah should have opposed it. The concept of Pakistan that was in Jinnah's mind was not there in the scheme of Rajaji, and hence Jinnah opposed it. The Congress had passed a resolution of full-fledged independence. The Congress was bound to it.

The opinions of Nehru and Patel differed after the Ad-hoc Government, and they started opposing Gandhi on the question of partition. Nehru and Patel said that Gandhi's analysis of the political situation was wrong and peace would be established if partition was accepted. In the prayer meeting of 1 June 1946 Gandhiji said,

> if the partition is inevitable, even then it should not take place in the presence of the British or it should not take place when the British are ruling the country, and I had informed this to the Viceroy. Nehru and Patel did not like that also. Let them do whatever they want but don't say that Gandhi was a partner in the sin of partition. Everybody is in haste for independence.[10]

When we read this speech, we can imagine why Dr Ram Manohar Lohia called Nehru and Patel the criminals of partition.

We have seen the falsehood of the claim that Gandhi was killed because of partition in the preceding chapter. And it is also evident that the Hindutva forces had targeted Gandhi and had been trying to kill him since 1934, when the issue of partition had not even taken birth. Hence it is superfluous to attribute the cause of partition to the murder of Gandhiji. Similar is the case of the 55 crore rupees. Even if it were admitted for the sake of argument that the partition was caused by Gandhi and the amount of 55 crore rupees was given because of Gandhi, it cannot justify that Gandhi should have been murdered. No murder can be justified. These two facts are being misused for justifying the murder of Gandhi. The people of the country also did not oppose the partition and giving the amount of 55 crore rupees. We can conclude this comfortably if we see how the people became frenzied while welcoming independence. If it was so, then it can be said that the people were also responsible for the partition because they accepted it. If the people were with the Hindutva forces, they should have given leadership to those who opposed the partition.

There is nothing new in the points made by me till now. Gandhian people may ask what new point I have put forth by quoting the opinions of Gandhiji. The Hindutva forces are not honest and hence they are not ready to accept the truth that the partition did not take place because of Gandhiji. One must have a mind broad enough to admit publicly if one knows the truth, but such broadness of mind cannot be expected from the Hindutva forces. That is why they say that Gandhiji was murdered because of 55 crore rupees. Gandhi himself claimed to be an orthodox Hindu. He said:

> I am an orthodox Hindu. I believe in the literature which is based on Vedas, Upanishadas, Puranas and other Hindu scriptures. Hence, I also believe in the concept of reincarnation and rebirth. I also have faith in the caste system because it is a Vedic system. I am an idol-worshipper. The caste and class system is an expression of the natural virtues. Caste system is based on birth. Nobody can change caste according to one's wish.[11]

What more evidence do we require to show that Gandhiji was the supporter of Hinduism? However, although he was a Hindu, he respected all other religions. He did not hate any religion and believed that the philosophy of all religions was humanitarianism. Can the Hindutva forces, who take pride in being a

Hindu, dare to proclaim so openly their hidden support for the caste system? Gandhi had the honesty and sincerity to say boldly what he felt. Mahatma Gandhi believed that he was a true Hindu, and hence he had respect for other religions on par with his respect for Hinduism. This is the difference between Gandhi and the so-called Hindutva forces.

Gandhi was a secular Hindu. The Hindutva forces lack secularism. Gandhi was not a person to appease Muslims, but he was a person who had respect for Islam, Christianity and other faiths. Gandhiji was a true secularist. He believed that all persons staying in this country are Indians. Their Indianness is not dependent on religion. Every person staying in this country is an Indian and hence India is a nation. He firmly believed that only this ideology would keep us united. He believed that we can become a true nation only if we cooperate with each other, have faith in and respect each other, and not hate each other. Gandhiji believed that if religion were considered to be a basis of nationality, then India would be as many nations as the number of religions.

Gandhiji's opinion was not accepted. And that resulted in partition. It can be safely argued that the Hindutva forces did not understand Gandhi or they did not have the capacity to understand him. Or, it can be conceded that the ideology of Gandhi was a great hurdle in the way of the opportunistic politics of the Hindutva forces, and hence they hated Gandhi. The Hindutva forces are still insisting that religion must be given importance in politics and are putting forth the concept of a religious nation (*Hindu Rashtra*). They don't understand the repercussions of such an ideology. Swami Vivekananda has said that 'the adverse consequences of interference in the social fabric by Hindu religion are being experienced by us up till now. Religion has no authority to frame the laws of society. Religion is concerned with the soul only and it should not interfere in the social matters.'[12] Was Gandhi saying anything other than this? This means that the Hinduism of the Hindutva forces is not based on true religion. Hence their politics of religion is also not honest.

The meeting of the Congress Working Committee was convened for giving approval to the scheme of partition. Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia were invited as special guests. Dr Lohia has given the details of the meeting in his book, *Guilty Men of Partition*:

> Gandhi, Sarhadd Gandhi Khan Abdul Gafarkhan, Jayprakash Narayan and I opposed the partition. Nobody else uttered even a single word against the scheme of partition. It is important that Gandhiji intervened in the discussions and proceedings of the meeting. Gandhiji said, in somewhat complaining tone, that Nehru and Patel had not informed him before giving approval to the partition. Nehru did not allow Gandhiji to complete his argument but in somewhat raised tone said that he was informing Gandhiji from time to time. When Gandhiji repeated that he was not informed of the scheme of

> partition by anybody, then Nehru changed his tone and tenure. He said that Gandhiji was in Noakhali at that time and hence, the details of the entire scheme were not informed to him.

The description given by Dr Lohia here and the description given by D.G. Tendulkar in volume 7 of *Mahatma* are almost similar. In the said meeting, Gandhiji said,

> The Congress leaders have given assurance and hence the Congress Party should keep the word and approve the principle of partition. After the Congress and Muslim League approve the principle of partition, the Viceroy and the British Government should step aside. The Muslim League and the Congress should work out the partition by forming a scheme themselves without the assistance and interference of any other party.

Thus, Gandhiji approved the partition only to ensure that the Congress should keep its promise if it was given. Jinnah might have apprehended that if India was given freedom first, then it would not do anything about the partition; hence he was insisting that the partition must take place before the British leave India. Gandhiji was confident that he could prevail upon Jinnah to accept the alternative and thus the country could avoid partition. Hence Gandhiji was insisting that the British should leave first and allow the country to take care of the partition. But Nehru and Patel were worried about something else. They feared that this issue might defer independence, and this could be the reason why they approved the partition without informing Gandhiji.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has held Sardar Patel more responsible for partition than Nehru. In the Ad-hoc Government, Sardar Patel had given the Finance portfolio to Liaquat Ali. Lord Wavell had suggested that the Finance portfolio should be taken over by the Congress and the Muslim League should be given the Home portfolio. But Patel might not have realized the importance of the Finance portfolio and might have considered the Home portfolio important. Hence he gave the Finance portfolio to Liaquat Ali and retained the Home portfolio with himself. However, later on, he could not appoint even a police constable without the permission of the Finance Ministry. Liaquat Ali superseded the Congress while preparing the budget. He promulgated a tax system which was consistent with the resolutions passed so far by the Congress, but it caused great difficulties for Indian capitalists. If that tax system were implemented, then Indian capitalists and business houses would have gone bankrupt, leaving them dissatisfied with the Congress. The tax system suggested by Liaquat Ali was consistent with the economic policy of the Congress. Hence the Congress could neither oppose nor support Liaquat Ali's budget. When this subject was discussed in the Cabinet meeting, Liaquat Ali said that the budget aimed at implementing the policies and resolutions

of the Congress. On this, some Ministers took objection that the details of this tax system were not informed to them. Liaquat Ali said that he had taken approval for the principles of the budget, and its details were confidential and these could not be discussed.

Vallabhbhai Patel was in a dilemma. He himself had refused the Finance portfolio! And now Liaquat Ali had cornered him. Dr Lohia has commented about the diplomacy of Vallabhbhai that it could not be seen at decisive times. Against this background, the propriety of Dr Lohia's statement is relevant. Dr Lohia has said:

> The greatness of Patel in the field of diplomacy cannot be compared with anybody. Patel had displayed his skills and courage to achieve the things which did not involve his insignificant selfish motives. An example of the annexation of the Princely States to India can be given. As it is, this task was not so much important because he did not have to wage a war against any mighty enemy. As it is, the Princes were already on the verge of bankruptcy. But since the other colleagues of Patel were lower in status than Patel, he was considered as a prominent player. It is not true that the task performed was impossible.

The attitude of Liaquat Ali as Finance Minister annoyed Patel, and he was so frustrated that he found it difficult to work with the Muslim League; hence, he concluded that the only alternative was partition. Patel's approval was taken first and then Lord Mountbatten put forth the scheme of partition before Nehru. When Mountbatten told Nehru that Patel had given approval to the scheme, Nehru's opposition became insignificant. Patel was not ready to talk anything other than partition.[13] Maulana Azad, like Dr Lohia, has also held Patel and Nehru responsible for partition. Patel had to persuade Liaquat Ali even for simple matters. Patel had a grudge against the latter and their differences increased. Each day, a new dilemma appeared. At this very moment, Lord Mountbatten put forth the scheme of partition before Patel. Patel was determined that the only solution for the dilemma of his inability to work with the Muslim League, and with the possibility of independence becoming remote and the government not functioning, was to grant Pakistan to the Muslim League and achieve independence. Because of this, Dr Lohia has sternly criticized Nehru and Patel: that both were thinking that they would never get an opportunity for power if independence was delayed, since both were of an advanced age.

It will be an exaggeration to say that Nehru and Patel were so eager for power that they accepted partition. Patel had accepted the partition to solve an acute dilemma; he felt helpless while working with the Muslim League, and surmised that the League and Congress would try one-upmanship over each other and it would be difficult to run the country. Hence he preferred parti-

tion to a united India. Nehru accepted partition because of its acceptance by Patel. Hence, to say that both of them accepted partition for securing power may be a harsh statement.

When Gandhiji was at Panchgani in 1946, Jayaprakash Narayan visited him. Gandhiji held his hands and said with eyes full of tears that his dream of a united India was shattered by Jawaharlal. Jayaprakash met Minoo Masani when he came to Mumbai. At that time, Masani was in the Congress Samajwadi Party. Jayaprakash narrated the Panchgani incident to Masani. Later, Masani wrote a book and Jayaprakash sent a letter to Masani to remind him of the said incident. Patel was becoming angry with the Muslim League because of his experience of the Ad-hoc Government. And hence he moved to a different position than Gandhiji on the issue of partition and the efforts of Gandhiji to avoid partition; slowly, he went totally against Gandhiji. Gandhi also realized this. He said that the Sardar had always respected his proposals and never went against him. But now, the Sardar was no longer his 'Yes Man' and had become self-sufficient.[14] Why did Gandhiji consider Patel his 'Yes Man'? It may be because Patel's political life had begun under the leadership of Gandhiji. He was Patel's political mentor. The Sardar used to say in the early years that he did not understand anything of politics, and that Gandhiji had taught him politics. Hence Patel did not refute any of Gandhiji's proposals except during the latter's last days. Dr Rajendra Prasad, in his introduction to Pyarelal's book titled *The Last Phase*, quoted the opinions of Gandhiji about partition. He wrote:

> Mahatma Gandhi was a staunch opponent of partition. All the leaders of Congress belonging to Hindu, Muslim and other religions also opposed partition. However, the atmosphere was changed when the Ad-hoc Government came to power. The Ministers of Muslim League declared non-cooperation with Congress Ministers. Because of this, the Congress Ministers started feeling that partition was the only solution. There were riots in some parts of the country. Even in these circumstances, Gandhiji was insisting on United India.

Different leaders have mentioned at different times how Mahatma Gandhi was against the partition. Hence it cannot be said by any stretch of imagination that he was responsible for it. One can understand from the foregoing discussion that the propaganda of Hindutva forces that Gandhiji was responsible for partition is utterly false and baseless. It is not a case that the Hindutva forces and their leaders do not know this. But if they agree that Gandhiji was against the partition, then they do not have any weapon in their hands to create hatred against Gandhi. Gandhiji always said that if the principle of two nations was accepted on the basis of religion, then nothing but religious riots would take place. It happened as Gandhiji had predicted.

Even after so many years, strife remains between the two nations. It has become the need of the politics of the Hindu and Muslim fanatic leaders in India as well as the religious fundamentalist leaders in Pakistan to keep this strife alive and growing to safeguard their political power. It is only because of this that the Pakistani rulers help disgruntled elements in Kashmir and the Hindutva forces in India keep on spreading hatred against Muslims and strengthening a Hindu identity by demolishing the Babri Masjid. As against this, Muslim fanatics in India make all possible attempts to keep Muslims away from Hindus even by proclaiming that 'Islam is in danger'. They had resorted to such politics even before independence.

Mahatma Gandhi consistently advocated the unity of Hindus and Muslims. Hence, the then Muslim League and the Hindutva forces both felt that the ideology of Gandhi was a pain in their necks, and hence, both opposed Gandhi. Mr N.R. Pathak has commented on this, saying that the policy of the Hindu Mahasabha was to indulge in character assassination of Gandhi, to criticize the Muslims but in a moderate language, and to maintain indifference towards the ultimate political goal. The Hindu Mahasabha did not have a political action plan. That is why they did not take any action and they remained passive when they had a good opportunity to oppose the Muslim League in Sindh province. The followers of the Hindu Mahasabha maintained utter silence even when the Muslims passed a resolution for Pakistan in the Sindh legislature. During the Second World War, the Mahasabha colluded with the Muslim League in order to enter the administration and they were successful.

Hindutva forces have always indulged in the politics of creating and maintaining tension and struggle between Hindus and Muslims, and such efforts have also been supported by Muslim fanatics. The riots that erupted after the partition affected Delhi too, and it became a slaughter-house. The last hunger strike undertaken by Gandhiji was against this. Gandhiji began his hunger strike on 13 January 1948. This hunger strike was not for 55 crore rupees. Gandhiji started it in order to bring about peace in Delhi. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sent a message to Gandhiji through his secretary, V. Shankar, asking what he could do. Gandhiji told him to give 55 crore rupees to Pakistan. This was an opinion expressed by Gandhiji during his hunger strike. But the hunger strike was not for that purpose. Tendulkar and Pyarelal, both secretaries of Gandhiji, have written volumes about him. But it is nowhere mentioned by them that Gandhiji went on a hunger strike for the money. It is not mentioned in Dr Lohia' book either. However, Hindutva forces made false propaganda of it.

Nehru expressed his dissatisfaction about the riots in Delhi in Patel's presence. Sardar Patel said that the Muslims had amassed weapons in order to seize Delhi and that the said weapons had been confiscated. He showed these weapons to Lord Mountbatten, Nehru and Azad. What Nehru and Azad

said after seeing those weapons is not relevant here because both of them were targets of prejudice, one of the Muslims and the other of the Hindutva forces. Hence, it is more relevant to discuss Lord Mountbatten's response. Mountbatten picked up two knives from among the weapons, one meant for cutting vegetables and the other for whetting. He said laughingly that those who aimed to take over Delhi by using such weapons must be lacking in military strategies! From this, one can imagine what kind of weapons were claimed to have been confiscated by Sardar Patel.

A detailed description of this incident can be found in the book *India Wins Freedom*. Gandhiji was deeply perturbed on hearing about the riots. But nobody in the government paid any attention to his appeals. He said, '*Meri koi sunta nahi hai*. The last weapon left in my hands for establishing peace in Delhi is a hunger strike.' Thus, his hunger strike began on 13 January 1948. Many people tried to persuade Gandhji not to go on a hunger strike but to no avail. Sardar Patel, Nehru and Azad were sitting beside him when he started the hunger strike. Patel expressed his displeasure. He told Gandhiji that the people would go against his hunger strike. He also said that the people would get an opportunity to blame him for Gandhiji's hunger strike. Why did Patel feel thus? Gandhiji replied,

> Sardar, I am not in China now but I am in Delhi. My eyes and ears are functioning normally. If you tell me that I should not believe in the evidence which has been seen by me with my own eyes and heard with my own ears and say that there is no basis for the complaints of the Muslims, then I cannot convince you about it and you also will not be able to convince me. Hindus and Sikhs are my brethren. We share the same blood. I cannot blame them today for their anger. I must salvage them of the sin committed by them and that is the reason why I am fasting. I hope that my hunger strike will open their eyes and make them see the reality.

From these words of Gandhiji, one can imagine his opinion of Patel. The sarcastic statements of Lord Mountbatten about the confiscated weapons are also pathetic. Gandhiji explained why he was on a hunger strike. He did not say that it was for the 55 crore rupees. When Sardar Patel stood up after his conversation with Gandhi, Maulana Azad held his hands and requested him not to leave Delhi while Gandhi was on the hunger strike. But Patel was still angry. He said, 'If this is his (Gandhiji's) attitude, then I do not need him. It is not possible to change my programme. I will go to Mumbai as decided.' Patel had lost hope in Gandhiji. But the people of Delhi were worried about Gandhi's life. The whole country was disturbed on hearing the news of his hunger strike. Maulana Azad has described the situation thus:

> Efforts were made to excite the masses by making false propaganda that

> Gandhiji was the enemy of Hindus. In one of the pamphlets, it was said that if Gandhiji did not change his attitude, he would be eliminated.[15] When Gandhiji returned from Bengal after the riots stopped there, the atmosphere of Delhi was charged with communal hatred. In order to maintain peace, Gandhiji had to start hunger strike once again in January 1948.[16]

On the second and third day of fasting, Gandhiji said that he would withdraw his hunger strike if Delhi remained peaceful.[17]

All these facts prove that the hunger strike was not for the 55 crore rupees. It is also a fact that after Gandhiji's hunger strike started, the Cabinet decided in a meeting to give the money to Pakistan as per the agreement. Patel proceeded on his tour. The leaders and ministers of the Congress were shaken by Gandhiji's hunger strike. An emergency meeting of the Cabinet was convened on 15 January 1948 in the Birla House room where Gandhi was lying on the bed, and the decision to give 55 crore rupees to Pakistan was taken in haste. All this is true, but it is important to note that the hunger strike was not for that purpose. The Hindutva forces have consistently made false propaganda and no efforts were made to counter that propaganda. Hence, since it is repeated time and again, people believe the falsehood as truth.

Gandhiji started his hunger strike on 13 January. The Cabinet took the decision to give 55 crore rupees on 15 January. Gandhiji withdrew his hunger strike at 12.45 pm on 18 January 1948. If the hunger strike of 13 January was for 55 crore rupees, then it ought to have been withdrawn on 15 January when the decision to transfer the money was taken. Or, at least, it ought to have been withdrawn the next day, on 16 January. But the hunger strike ended three days after the decision to transfer the money. This clearly shows that the hunger strike was not for 55 crore rupees but for bringing peace to Delhi.

Another, more important, piece of evidence to prove that the hunger strike was for peace is that a Peace Committee was formed consisting of 130 persons belonging to all religions and under the chairmanship of Dr Rajendra Prasad for ensuring that the hunger strike should end early. In the said Committee, there were representatives of the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha as well. A public meeting was convened on 17 January by the Committee. Gandhiji had put forth seven conditions for ending his hunger strike. Dr Rajendra Prasad announced those seven conditions in the said meeting. The following were the seven conditions which were duly agreed to:

1. We, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and others, assure that we will maintain brotherhood and harmony in Delhi. We pledge that we will protect the lives and properties of Muslims. We are also taking precaution that such incidents will not be repeated in Delhi.
2. We assure Gandhiji that the *Urs* of Khwaja Qutubuddin Mazhar will be celebrated this year also.

3. The Muslims shall be able to carry on their day-to-day activities as usual in Sabzi Mandi, Karol Baug, Pahadganj and other parts of the city.
4. The Hindus and Sikhs should vacate the Masjids occupied by them and hand them over to the Muslims.
5. The Muslims who have migrated out of Delhi and if they want to return to Delhi, we shall not object to that, and nobody will create hurdles for their erstwhile businesses and occupations.
6. All these efforts we will make in our personal capacity. We shall not take help from the police and military for this purpose.
7. Mahatma Gandhi should repose full confidence in us and should end his hunger strike, and should give us leadership and guidance even henceforth.

Mahatma Gandhi ended his hunger strike on 18 January only after the above seven conditions were agreed to on 17 January 1948. None of these conditions mentioned the issue of 55 crore rupees. This proves that the hunger strike was not for that issue. Gandhiji opposed the partition. It was his opinion that Pakistan should be given 55 crore rupees as per the agreement. But the hunger strike was not for that purpose. It was for the purpose of bringing about peace in Delhi. And Gandhiji ended his hunger strike only after the All Religion Committee agreed to the above conditions. This is one side of the coin, and the other is that a bomb was hurled at Gandhiji in Pune in 1934, at a time when none of these questions were in existence. He was saved only because he was in different vehicle. Seven persons who were in the following motor car were injured. The name of Narayan Apte came up in relation to this case. Narayan Apte was also involved in the murder of Gandhi. How do we reconcile this? Things will be clear only if the truth is exposed that the partition and the 55 crore rupees had nothing to do with the murder of Gandhiji.

The Seeds of Partition

The Congress gave consent for partition by ignoring the opposition of Gandhiji because the Muslim League had left them with no alternative and they felt that it was impossible to rule over a united India because of the adamant attitude of the League. Thus, the British were successful in their Divide and Rule policy, and on 14 and 15 August 1947, ancient India was divided into two nations. A million Hindus and Muslims were massacred after the partition. Such a genocide had never occurred in the history of the world. Even British historians are saying, after the secret documents of the British have been opened, that this genocide could have been easily averted. The British historian Andre Roberts has said that Lord Mountbatten was solely responsible for this genocide and that an impeachment proceeding ought to have been initiated against him (*Apprecial of 1940–50*). In the said book, he says that 'India was

to be given freedom up to 3rd June 1948 but Lord Mountbatten changed the timetable and hurriedly partitioned the country in his own regime.' Mr Roberts has blamed Lord Mountbatten for the partition and further said,

> he had deployed 18 thousand police for protecting one and a half crore people when 25 thousand police were required along the Punjab border. This was the same Lord Mountbatten who had ordered 14 divisions to descend on the beach of Normandy during Second World War but he depended on 18 thousands of police personnel only, for carrying out partition of such a huge country.

Cyril Radcliffe was given the task of measuring the border-line between India and Pakistan by Mountbatten. Radcliffe had never visited India and was not aware of the geographical reality of India. Such a man was entrusted the task of demarcating the borders of two nations in just forty days. He himself had said that he should have been given a period of two years for this task, but the work was carried out hurriedly within forty days. Another great blunder committed by Mountbatten was that the decision about the borders was declared after the transfer of power. Had he declared the decision immediately after the demarcation, then the exchange of populations would have taken place under the supervision of British military officers and they would have carried out this work while power was still in their hands. If the exchange of population had taken place before the actual transfer of power, then there would have been a law-and-order situation in the border areas. Mountbatten did not take such a precaution and hence Andre Roberts blames Mountbatten for the genocide.

Even after five to six months of the Independence of India, the violence between Hindus and Muslims continued. Lakhs of people were migrating. The people in whose hands power vested were the great leaders of the country. However, they were confused and utterly bewildered on seeing the consequences of the partition. Their entire lives had been spent in the freedom struggle and jails. They did not have any experience of administration and, in such circumstances, the responsibility of such a big nation fell on their shoulders. In comparison to this responsibility, the calamities caused by the partition were huge. These leaders went into depression because of the huge responsibility upon their shoulders and the incidents taking place all over the country. They were, most of them, on the verge of old age. They lost their self-confidence. In such a condition, Nehru and Patel, two great leaders of the country, went to meet Lord Mountbatten and pleaded with him to take over the government and run the country himself. Mountbatten refused the request of Nehru and Patel.[18] One cannot imagine what would have been the consequences and what feelings would have been generated in the minds of the people had Mountbatten accepted the request. The country would have

been plunged into anarchy because of the screams of partition and the explosive atmosphere that resulted after the partition. Also, a feeling of frustration would have been spread and an impression would have been created that the people were not capable of self-rule even after securing independence. The decision of Lord Mountbatten was most valuable in this background. The differences between Nehru and Patel grew acute during this period. During the first five-and-a-half months of independence, although the two colleagues, who had fought the battle for freedom shoulder to shoulder, did not become enemies, their differences reached an extreme. A discussion had begun that if the situation continued, it would be difficult to run the administration. The differences were not limited to these two persons only. What was the way out? Efforts were being made to mitigate the differences. The country's politics would have taken an entirely different turn if the evening of that fateful day did not witness the murder of Gandhiji. It is possible that the Congress would have split even before completing seventy-five years. But it was not to be. The evening of that day was ominous. The screams of that fateful evening can be heard even today, fifty years after the murder of Gandhi. It is for this reason that the murder of Gandhiji is being supported unabashedly.

On 30 January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi had told Sardar Patel at 4 in the evening,

> Sardar, either of you must resign from the Ministry. It will not be proper for both of you to be in the Cabinet. The differences and controversies between you shall be damaging to the country. Jawaharlal is coming to meet me after the prayer meeting. I am going to tell him also. I have to discuss this with Nehru and hence I may cancel my tour of Sevagram. I will not leave Delhi until and unless unity and harmony between both of you is established.

Thereafter, the prayer meeting was to take place. Gandhiji was to discuss this dispute with Nehru after the prayer meeting. Gandhi was committed to truth and non-violence throughout his life, and keeping time was also a value for him. But the discussion going on with Patel was so serious that Gandhiji did not keep time for the first time in his life. When the discussion between them got prolonged and the time for prayer was drawing close, Aabha, who was supporting Gandhiji, started becoming restless. She did not wish that the discussion with Patel should stop; at the same time, she was restless that the time of prayer was nearing. She pushed the clock gently before Gandhiji to remind him of the time. But it was futile. Gandhi was deeply involved in the discussion despite violation of his principle of keeping time, which shows how intense the differences between the two must have been.

Although Gandhiji told Sardar Patel that either Nehru or he should resign from the Cabinet, and informed him that he was going to suggest this to Nehru also after the prayer meeting, he must have made up his mind that

Sardar Patel should resign; this means that the latter was given an ultimatum by Gandhiji.[19]

The differences between Nehru and Patel could not be mitigated and Gandhiji was murdered on the same day. Both tried hard to suppress their differences after Gandhi's murder. Sardar Patel had a strong grip on the party organization and Jawaharlal was popular amongst the people. After the murder of Gandhi, Nehru realized that he was being cornered in the party organization over his progressive policies. He was in a minority in the Congress Working Committee during the life of Patel and also thereafter. The right-wing group of followers of Patel was powerful. Nehru became more and more aware of this, and hence started talks with Jayaprakash Narayan for the re-entry of socialists into the Congress. Patel had oppossed the socialists even during the freedom struggle. This is why Patel opposed the idea of having a separate group or party within the Congress. Therefore, the Socialist Party and the Peasants' and Workers' Organization (which later became the Peasants' and Workers' Party) in Maharashtra left the Congress. The talks between Nehru and Jaya-prakash failed. Jayaprakash insisted on a time-bound implementation of the fourteen points programme and the talks failed on this issue. This incident took place after the death of Patel. Nehru was appealing to the socialists to come back to the Congress only with the intention that he may achieve a majority in the party and the organization. Jayaprakash Narayan asked Nehru, in a letter sent to him, that if socialists entered the Congress, some of them should get ministerial births and Nehru could achieve a majority in the Committee, but he asked for this after the implementation of the programme. This shows the level of politics of that time.

Mahatma Gandhi had very clearly declared his political heir in the Congress Working Committee. He said, 'I have had many differences with Jawaharlal ever since we became colleagues in the freedom movement. I have said so earlier also and am reiterating the same. But my political heir is Jawaharlal only and not Rajaji.' If we consider this, we can safely conclude that Gandhi intended that Patel should resign from the Cabinet. It is not likely that Gandhiji would have told Nehru to resign from the Cabinet, because he had expressed confidence that a day would arrive when Nehru would start speaking his (Gandhiji's) language.

Gandhiji did not have a favourable opinion of Patel after Independence. Sardar Patel did not meet Gandhiji at the end of his last hunger strike. He had gone to Mumbai on a tour. Gandhiji's hunger strike was attracting the world's attention. The whole country was worried. All the Congress leaders were camping in Delhi. The work to be attended to by Patel on his Mumbai tour was not more important than the circumstances created due to Gandhi's hunger strike. In spite of that, Patel proceeded on his tour. Gandhi had intended that only Patel should resign, and this can also be proved by a speech given

by him to the Congress Working committee. The time of this speech and the time when he suggested to Patel that he should resign were different. Yet, in the said meeting, Gandhiji had indeed suggested that Sardar should quit the party. He had said,

> I know that Sardar Patel and Rajendrababu are not satisfied with the Resolution. But there is no reason why both of them should resign from the Committee simply because of that. Even if Sardar Patel and Rajendrababu quit the Congress, the work of Congress will not stop. It will not matter if these two persons are in Congress or outside. Congress's work will continue. It never stops. Dadabhai, Firozshah and Tilak built the Congress, but the work of Congress did not stop even after them.[20]

Even before independence, Gandhiji had suggested, in a different way, that if Patel wanted to leave the Congress, he was free to do so. On 30 January 1948 also, he gave an ultimatum to Sardar Patel about resigning from the Ministry, even though he was not aware that the end of his life was near and that he had only a few hours left of his life. Because the time of prayer was passing, Gandhi was hurrying towards the place of the prayer meeting when two activists from Kathiawad came up to meet him. He told them in haste, 'We will meet after prayer if I am alive.' Only some time back, Gandhiji had told Patel that he would speak to Nehru after the prayer meeting. However, while leaving the room, he was speaking the language of life and death, and thereafter, within a few minutes, he uttered his last words, 'Hey Ram'. What a strange coincidence that was! Gandhiji, who used to say that he would live a 125 years, died at the age of 78. And his life was ended by the same Nathuram Godse who had told him that nobody would not allow him to live for 125 years.

The Central Home Ministry had received information about the murder of Gandhiji fifteen days prior to the murder; even then, Gandhiji's life could not be saved. If the events of 30 January 1948 had not occurred and if Gandhi had had a chance to speak to Nehru, what would have been the outcome? This is a matter of ifs and buts, which have no meaning in politics. But it cannot be said that one should not think about it. If Patel had resigned, as advised by Gandhiji, then what would have been the reaction of the Patel group? Patel had a majority in the Working Committee. Nehru was always in the minority and Sardar Patel had gone against Gandhiji many times. Hence it is possible that he might have refused the suggestion of resigning. Patel did not agree with Gandhiji's opinion that the Congress be dissolved and transformed into a People's Welfare Organization. Gandhiji had also said that if at all the Congress had to be retained, then Jayaprakash Narayan or Acharya Narendra Dev should be appointed its President. Patel did not pay heed to this either. Similarly, if Patel had not heeded the suggestion of resigning, would Gandhiji have asked Nehru to resign and give a free hand to Patel? What would have

been the consequences of Nehru resigning as Prime Minister? Would the followers of Patel have tolerated his resignation? During that period there was no harmony in the relations between Gandhi and Patel. Hence, if Patel had resigned, his followers would have opposed it and perhaps the Congress would have split at that moment itself, or the strain in the relationship between Gandhi and Nehru would have increased. One cannot imagine what turn such a scenario might have given to politics.

Gandhiji was killed by people of the Hindutva ideology. Was it really difficult to save his life? Was it utterly impossible? I have attempted to find answers to these questions in the ensuing chapters.

Until very recently, Hindutva propaganda claimed that the partition of the country was an act of Gandhiji. Thereafter, it began to claim that Gandhiji was killed because he compelled the giving of 55 crore rupees to Pakistan. All this is aimed at spreading hatred against Muslims in the minds of Hindus.

Were there attempts to murder Gandhi even before the questions of partition and 55 crore rupees came into existence? Is it not a fact that Nathuram Godse was arrested for such attempts? Was Narayan Apte not involved in the conspiracy of murder? Wasn't Nathuram Godse one of the persons who carried a lethal weapon for murdering Gandhi at Sevagram? At that time, neither had the partition taken place nor had the question of 55 crore rupees arisen. Then, why were attempts made to kill Gandhiji?

The Hindutva forces were opposing the ideology of Gandhiji which was influencing the people of the country. The whole country was behind Gandhiji. That is the reason why the whole country stood before the British with the determination of '*karenge ya marenge*' (do or die) at a single call of Gandhiji. So long as the influence of Gandhiji's ideology existed, the Hindutva ideology could not have spread. It was for this reason that Gandhiji was murdered, and attempts were made to murder him even before the issues of partition and 55 crore rupees arose. This is the actual reason why Gandhiji was killed by Hindutva forces. If they tell this truth to the people, then the people will hate them. Hence they conceal the true reason and put forth the reasons of partition and 55 crore rupees in order to gain the sympathy of the people. The Hindutva forces are well versed in the art of blaming Gandhiji, even to the extent of saying that he was blood-thirsty and a traitor to the country.

Nathuram Godse was hanged on 15 November and the Hindutva forces observe this day as Martyr's Day. In Mumbai, Gopal Godse and other accomplices of Nathuram and supporters of the murderers gave speeches on 15 November 1993. In those speeches it was said that Gandhiji was a traitor to the country and a blood-thirsty person, and that the rivers in which his ashes were immersed have been polluted. If these rivers are polluted, why did the Hindutva forces trade the water of the Ganges some years ago? Did they not sell the water of the Ganges? Hypocrisy and double-talk have always been

the virtues of the Hindutva forces. It is a part of their system of propaganda. They have used these tactics of creating confusion, making false statements and propagating contradictory views in the matter of the Babri Masjid.

The people of the country stood behind Gandhiji under the influence of his ideology during the freedom struggle. But the RSS, which proclaims '*Hindu Rashtra*' and Hindutva, did not even participate in the freedom struggle. The people of the country did not go with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindutva forces. The common people are easily influenced by the poison of hatred, yet they did not support Hindutva forces. The entire country was hypnotized by the ideology of Gandhiji. The whole country was moved by his single word and the British empire trembled. Mr G.D. Madgulkar, a noted poet, has described the strength of Gandhiji thus: '*Uchalales tu meeth muthbhar an samrajyacha khachala paya*' ('You lifted a handful of salt and the foundation of the empire went down'). This was not the power of an individual. It was the strength of the country created by Gandhi's ideology. This was why the British empire feared Gandhiji and the Hindutva forces were not able to compete with him. Hence, the Hindutva forces hated Gandhiji. Gandhiji was murdered because of that.

They say that the country would not have been partitioned if Gandhi had not been there. Mr Govind Talwalkar, the editor of *Maharashtra Times*, has reviewed the English book written by Mr B.R. Nanda, titled *Gandhi and His Critics*, in the edition of the newspaper dated 26 November 1993. He says, 'The critics of Gandhiji believe that the partition would not have taken place if Gandhiji were not there. Some people, nowadays, have decided to be proud of making ridiculous statements.' The ideology of the Hindutva forces faced a challenge because of Mahatma Gandhi and hence he was murdered, and this is the truth. There is no other reason behind the murder.

We have discussed Mahatma Gandhi's opinions on the question of partition. We have to understand the background of politics prior to the partition. Even before Gandhiji's rise in politics, separate constituencies were established in 1909. It was a strategy of Indian politicians to secure political reforms from the rulers of the time. Talwalkar writes, 'Even Gopal Krishna Gokhale fell a prey to this. He should have told the Government boldly that we would never approve the scheme of separate constituencies even though the constitutional reforms remained unimplemented. But Gokhale did not say this.'[21]

> Namdar Gokhale had formulated a scheme before his death. The said scheme was also advocating unity of Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, Lokmanya Tilak had entered into a pact at Lucknow. Both these leaders were of the opinion that the freedom struggle should be converted into a Two-Party struggle instead of Three-Party struggle even at the cost of giving more preference to the Muslim community.[22]

Mahatma Gandhi was a supporter of Hindu–Muslim unity. Before him,

Lokmanya Tilak and Namdar Gokhale had also supported Hindu–Muslim unity. All of them were political leaders. They were aware of the reality that the freedom movement would never be decisive in a country like India wherein there existed many religions and sects, unless they all came together. Besides, Swami Vivekananda, who took pride in being a Hindu and who was not connected with politics, also insisted on the unity of Hindus and Muslims. He said, 'If we think of our motherland, the only hope we see is that the Hindu religion and Islam must come together. The future India cannot be built by the persons who have the brains of Vedas and the bodies of Islam.'[23]

All the leaders who thought about and understood the welfare of India, put forth the ideology of Hindu–Muslim unity. Is there any difference between the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on Hindu–Muslim unity? Why do those who accuse Gandhiji of appeasing Muslims not make the same allegation against Swami Vivekananda? A pact was signed between Lokmanya Tilak and Jinnah in the year 1916. This pact gave approval, in principle, to the theory of two nations. If we have to decide who the culprits of India's partition were, then we have to implicate Lokmanya Tilak also. Lokmanya Tilak cannot escape from this offence because he played a major role in the Lucknow Pact.[24]

The seeds of the partition of India were sown after the establishment of separate constituencies in 1909. The Lucknow Pact entered into by Tilak, who played a major role in preparing the Pact, also sowed the seeds of partition, which started growing; in course of time, the seeds became a plant. The blame for the partition cannot be laid against any single leader. Mahatma Gandhi tried his utmost to avoid the partition. If the role played by Gandhiji against the partition is analysed impartially, no wise man can blame Gandhiji for the partition.

After the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wrote a letter to Shyamaprasad Mukherjee in connection with the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, on 18 July 1948. Sardar Patel informed Dr Mukherjee through the said letter that the murder of Gandhi took place because of the poison spread by the RSS and Mahasabha and their politics. Sardar Patel said:

> It is our (the Home Department's) information that the murder of Gandhi took place because of activities of RSS and Hindu Mahasabha and because of the RSS activities, to say it precisely. I have no doubt in my mind that a hand of an extremist group of Hindu Mahasabha is involved in the murder of Gandhiji. The RSS has even challenged the existence of the Government. The RSS is involved in destructive and sabotaging activities. (*Sardar Patel Correspondence*, Volume 6)

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel also sent a letter to the chief of the RSS, Madhavrao Golwalkar, on 11 September 1948. In the said letter, Patel said,

> The RSS is attacking the Muslims as it is obsessed with revenge. The RSS is perpetrating atrocities on innocent men and women and children only because they are Muslims. The speeches of the leaders of RSS are full of communal hatred and venom. The people of RSS expressed their joy by distributing sweets after the murder of Gandhiji.

Sardar Patel said in a statement dated 4 February 1948,

> The RSS people have started sabotaging activities. The people of RSS have committed arson, plunder and massacre in many parts of the country. The RSS has perpetrated violence through its activists. They have killed many people. The RSS is only responsible for the murder of Gandhiji. (From the letter sent to Golwalkar Guruji and a pamphlet dated 4 February 1948, published in *The Times of India*, 21 October 1990)

The ban on the RSS was lifted only because of Sardar Patel. Hence, the conclusions drawn by Patel cannot be termed as statements made by an opponent of the RSS. It is for this that the opinions of Patel acquire importance. Patel had sent letters to Dr Mukherjee and Golwalkar on the basis of information available with him. Patel had some sympathy for the RSS. Because of this, he had got a resolution passed in the absence of Nehru so as to convert the RSS into a youth front of the Congress. This resolution was passed after the murder of Gandhiji. It is therefore significant that Patel made these statements about the RSS even though he had so much sympathy for it. This throws adequate light on the form of the RSS. It is said that Patel had tried to convert the RSS into a youth front of Congress with the intention of transforming the RSS.

The Issue of 55 Crores

In order to justify the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, another reason that is put forth, apart from the partition, is of Rs 55 crores given to Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi insisted on the government giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan and it was given. Gandhiji started a hunger strike in order to compel the Government of India to pay the Rs 55 crores. He was murdered as a result of the unrest and annoyance generated by these two reasons. This is the propaganda propagated by the Hindutva forces to us. We cannot understand how the issue of the money was insignificant unless we discuss, in detail, the background of this issue, and the genocide and riots that took place afterwards and the number of refugees displaced after partition. The amount lying in the reserve funds of India, the armies and the properties were distributed after the partition.

It was a matter so normal that such issues arise even when the families of two brothers are separated and their ancestral properties are divided. The partition was an unfortunate event. It was inevitable and hence the distribution of the reserve funds and the properties was also inevitable. At that time,

India had a reserve fund of Rs 375 crores, which was distributed. India had given a first instalment of Rs 20 crores in view of Pakistan's acute need. It was legally decided by executing an agreement between both the countries as to how much was to be given to Pakistan. Accordingly, India agreed that it owed another Rs 55 crores to Pakistan as per the agreement executed in December 1947. India assured Pakistan, in writing, that Rs 55 crores would be given within the stipulated time period. It was at that time that Pakistan attacked Kashmir using tribals. Hence, the Indian government took the stand, on the insistence of Patel, that the 55 crores would not be given to Pakistan until and unless the Kashmir problem was resolved, and Pandit Nehru started publicly supporting the policy of not giving Pakistan the agreed money.

Nehru called a press conference on 2 January 1948 where he said that the proposal to pay 55 crore rupees was stayed. He said, 'any country would have freezed this amount in such circumstances. (That is, it would have refused to give the amount.) But we are not freezing this amount. We have signed an agreement with Pakistan to give the money. However, we are ready to pay this amount (Rs 55 crores) as soon as agreement is arrived at on other issues.' It can be said that there was a basis in principle for Nehru's stand. But it was not adequately solid. It was weak.

However, Vallabhbhai's stand was entirely different from Nehru's. It appears that Sardar Patel was not ready at all to give 55 crore rupees to Pakistan. He said that instead of giving this money to Pakistan, it should be used for the rehabilitation of refugees. Nehru and Patel had not discussed this issue with Gandhiji before entering into the agreement with Pakistan. This was the first ever agreement entered into with another nation by independent India. And Prime Minister Nehru was trying to delay the implementation of this first ever agreement on the pretext of other pending questions, while Home Minister Patel was saying that the money should be used for rehabilitation. These leaders agreed to sacrifice such a big portion of a country, and that too by keeping Gandhiji in the dark; it was not befitting for them to haggle over such a trivial issue. One can understand Nehru's position that the money could not be given unless issues, including Kashmir, were settled with Pakistan. However, such a condition ought to have been incorporated into the agreement itself. Why the condition that 55 crores would not be given unless all questions were resolved? Such behaviour on the part of India, that too relating to the first ever pact with another country and not abiding by the same, would have tarnished the image of the country the world over. Gandhi was not ready for this. He was opposed to Nehru and Patel on this ground. If such a condition, as per Nehru's stance, was incorporated into the said agreement, the agreement would not have come into being at all and politics would have taken an entirely different turn. In order to avoid that the agreement was made, but when the time came for payment, the leaders started haggling!

There was considerable difference between the stance of Prime Minister Nehru and that of Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, who had signed the agreement with Pakistan on the issue. In fact, Patel decided to take revenge. He had had a bitter experience with Liaquat Ali Khan, who was the Finance Minister representing the Muslim League in the Ad-hoc Government in which Patel was the Home Minister. It was during this time that Patel's weakness in diplomacy came to light, as he was angry. Hence he took the stance of not giving the money to Pakistan. He surmised that consequently there would be financial crisis in Pakistan. This was the true object of Sardar Patel's stance. However, he was trying to justify his stance with the help of principles.

It was Sardar Patel's claim that it was decided to pay Rs 55 crores to Pakistan only when all issues with Pakistan were resolved. He was saying that Pakistan was not to be paid this amount till the resolution of Kashmir issue. It is to be noted here that Sardar Patel was not relying on conditions in the pact for justifying his stance. There was no such condition in the pact. The diplomacy of the so-called shrewd diplomat, Mr Patel, had gone bankrupt once again. The first time was when he insisted on the Home Department portfolio instead of the Finance Department in the Ad-hoc Government, and the second time was when he either forgot or was not successful in incorporating into the pact the condition that Pakistan would be given Rs 55 crores only when all issues with Pakistan, including Kashmir, were resolved. Or, it must be assumed that Sardar Patel committed a mistake by taking the stance of not paying the money to Pakistan until all issues along with Kashmir were resolved, when, in fact, the other issues with Pakistan and the payment of the money were not connected with each other at all.

Sardar Patel could not prove that it was a condition in the said pact that Pakistan would be given the money only after resolving all the issues, including Kashmir. He was taking advantage of opinions he had expressed in the discussions that took place before the said pact, and thus was refusing to give 55 crores to Pakistan as agreed.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sent a lengthy statement to the press on 12 January 1948 in connection with the issue of the money, which has been quoted in full in the sixth volume of the *Correspondence of Sardar Patel*. Hence, there is no question whether it was true or false. In the Partition Council, the property, reserve funds and debt of united India were considered. In his statement of 12 January 1948, Sardar Patel said:

> The Kashmir issue was discussed in a very cordial atmosphere in the discussion that took place on 26 November 1947. Next day, i.e. on 27 November, an informal agreement was arrived at after discussing two issues, of distribution of reserve funds and the liability of debt. However, the representatives of Pakistan gave the information about this agreement to the press in the

> evening of 27 November only. In the meeting that took place on the next day, i.e. 28 November 1947, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and its Finance Minister and I myself were present. In the said meeting of 28 November, I read out my statement. I had said in that statement that we are not bound to pay the money, unless the Kashmir issue is resolved.

Sardar Patel made this statement, putting forth his opinion, in the meeting of 28 November. It does not matter whether he made the statement orally or read it out. The question is whether the said opinion of Patel was accepted by the representatives of Pakistan and whether they had agreed to it. In his statement, Patel did not express his opinion but gave the details of what he had said. After this statement, the representatives of Pakistan boycotted the meeting. Their boycott meant that they had not accepted Patel's opinion that India was not bound to pay the money to Pakistan unless the Kashmir issue was resolved. Naturally, this was Patel's opinion and not a decision agreed to by both sides.

It was decided to take this dispute before a tribunal when it arose in the Partition Council. On 1 December 1947, the agreements arrived at, informally, were presented. In that meeting also, it was not clarified that it was agreed to give Rs 55 crores after the resolution of the Kashmir issue. A meeting of the tribunal was convened on 8 and 9 December at Lahore. Patel had only said that Pakistan was trying to obtain Rs 55 crores in the meanwhile. He had never said that there was a condition in the pact that the money would be paid after resolution of the Kashmir issue, and that Pakistan was demanding the money by violating the condition. However, Pakistan was eager to get this money because it was aware of the opinion of Sardar Patel. The Pakistan High Commissioner declared in the press conference of 7 December 1947 what had been decided upon informally. Patel stated in this connection that it had been decided not to make the pact public until complete agreement had been reached, yet it was given to the press. This may be correct, but it was a question of protocol.

It was not said by Vallabhbhai Patel in the statement of 12 Januany 1948 that it was a condition in the said pact that Pakistan was not to be paid unless all issues, including Kashmir, were resolved. He had only relied on his opinion expressed in that meeting. He also said that the representatives of Pakistan had not opposed him during some of the earlier meetings. He was emphasizing only the objection made by the Pakistani Prime Minister on 2 December 1947. It cannot be said that one has agreed to a proposal if one did not object. Sardar Patel said in his statement of 12 January,

> We have sent a telegram to the Pakistan Prime Minister on 30 December 1947. In that, we said that the pact was binding on us, but we are deferring the payment of rupees fifty-five crores to Pakistan because we have changed

> our stance after Pakistan has become aggressive on Kashmir.

From the said telegram it also becomes clear that there was no condition in the pact about not giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan unless the Kashmir issue was resolved. This is also stated in the minutes of the Partition Council thus:

> Pakistan has been given rupees twenty crores earlier and rupees fifty-five crore are yet to be given. After paying rupees fifty-five crores, India has not to pay anything to Pakistan. This amount of rupees fifty-five crores is to be given out of the money payable to Pakistan in respect of the reserve funds of United India and thereafter India did not owe anything to Pakistan.

This shows that India was to give a total of Rs 75 crores to Pakistan. Rs 20 crores were given earlier and India had agreed to give the remaining amount. In the pact signed in this regard, there was no condition that India was to give money only after resolution of all issues, including Kashmir. Sardar Patel had said in the meeting of the Partition Council that no money would be paid unless all issues were resolved, but that was an opinion stated by Patel. It is proved that this was not a condition in the said pact.

Gandhiji thought over it for many days. He met the Governor General, Lord Mountbatten, on 6 January 1948, and made himself conversant with the legal implications of the matter of the money. He did not go to Nehru or Patel for this purpose. Lord Mountbatten gave his opinion that,

> If India did not give rupees fifty five crores, then India's image will suffer damage. It will be said that India is a nation which does not keep its word and therefore, other nations will hesitate to do business with India. Hence, it will amount to spoiling the fair image of India if this money is refused or spent elsewhere. Apart from this, it will not be proper legally.

Gandhiji replied to him that he did not have to consider the legal aspects but whether it was proper morally. It was for this reason that Gandhiji insisted that Pakistan should be given Rs 55 crores.

However, he did not start his indefinite hunger strike on 13 January 1948 for the said demand or for his insistence on giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. He resorted to a hunger strike for bringing about peace in Delhi. The propaganda of Hindutva forces that Gandhiji's hunger strike was for the payment of Rs 55 crores is totally false. This has been discussed in the preceding chapter.

This false propaganda was not restricted to this extent; a hue and cry was made that the money to be given to Pakistan was to be recovered from Hindus like a *jiziya* tax. This has been mentioned by Mr N.R. Phatak in his book titled *Development of Indian Nationalism*. All this amounts to not keeping one's word and refusing to pay money that was agreed upon. The money

was to be paid from the reserve fund, yet the propaganda said that it would be recovered from the people and thus a venom was being spread in the minds of the people. Nehru and Patel did not explain the intentions of Mahatma Gandhi, who gave importance to morality and purity of means in politics. This also caused misunderstanding about Gandhiji. On the one hand, it was the poisonous and false propaganda of the Hindutva forces, and on the other hand, the silence maintained by those leaders who were with Gandhiji throughout their lives. This is the reason why Gandhi became the target. He had not said that India should give money to Pakistan from its share of reserve fund. According to him, to refuse this amount was a refusal of moral behaviour. The Hindutva forces opposed giving the money to Pakistan, but they did not undertake any agitation when such a huge portion of the country's wealth was divided. They did not feel it their obligation to oppose the partition of the country, but they take pride in their treacherous act of killing an unarmed sage.

The act of murdering a person by pretending to be bowing down at the feet of an old man does not bestow any pride on the perpetrators. It was not Gandhiji alone who said that Pakistan should be given Rs 55 crores. This was the opinion of Lord Mountbatten, Rajaji, the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Mr C.D. Deshmukh, and others as well. Then why did the murderers of Gandhiji not murder these people also? All these persons also enjoyed a high status in politics, but it was not on par with Gandhiji's status. Hence, it can be said that they were not murdered because of that. But to say this amounts to admitting that there was a different politics behind the murder of Gandhi. Gandhiji was very influential and hence he was murdered, which means that the Hindutva forces were not angry with Gandhi for saying that Pakistan be given Rs 55 crores. Their anger centered round Gandhiji was an act of revenge because the people did not accept the ideology of the Hindutva forces due to the influence of the Gandhian ideology. The ideology of Gandhiji, his philosophy and his extraordinary leadership were real hurdles in the way of the Hindutva forces; hence, they made attempts to murder Gandhiji since 1934, when the issues of partition and the money were not even in existence. The Hindutva forces concocted the story of Rs 55 crores. If their story was true, then they had no reason to attempt the murder of Gandhiji prior to Independence and since 1934.

A former member of the Planning Commission, Shri R.K. Patil, was reported as saying in *Aajacha Sudharak* (Today's Reformer), in January 1994:

> The decision of the Indian government not to give the dues of Pakistan was wrong. Because, the dues were created prior to that. It was a part of the condition of partition. It means that the said amount ought to have been paid on 15 August 1947 itself. I cannot say why it was delayed for so many days. To say that when Pakistan demanded the money, we would not give

> this money now, because we are in war against you, would amount to refusing to repay the dues. This was not a grant or assistance. It was fulfilment of the obligation.

This was also the opinion of Mr Chintamanrao Deshmukh:

> The argument that we would not pay Pakistan, this money, because it would use the money for purchasing the bullets to be fired on us Indians, was fallacious. India was not supposed to decide how Pakistan should use that money. It was not proper even during the war to refuse old obligation. Because, the debt was created when there was no war.

The money ought to have been given when demanded. Besides, it would be a distortion of history to say that the war was imposed on India by Pakistan. When Pakistan committed aggression on Kashmir, it (Kashmir) was an independent nation. It had not entered into an agreement of annexation with India. It was for this reason that the then Governor General, Lord Mountbatten, put forth a condition before the King of Kashmir that he must enter into an agreement of annexation and then only would he be entitled to India. Mr R.K. Patil has aptly discussed all these facts. The thinking of Sardar Patel that Rs 55 crores should not be given to Pakistan unless the issue of Kashmir was resolved appears to be hypocritical. Before the issue of Kashmir was raised by Pakistan, it was created by the King of Kashmir, Hari Singh. If Hari Singh had annexed Kashmir to India when the partition took place, it would have been said that the attack on Kashmir by the Pakistani intruders amounted to an aggression on India. But Hari Singh created Kashmir as an independent nation between 15 August and 27 October 1947. Therefore, it was not justified on the part of India to refuse the payment to Pakistan, even when it had committed an aggression against the Kashmiri nation. The said pact was the first ever pact entered by independent India with another country. India would have lost its face before the world community. Mahatma Gandhi insisted on paying this amount to Pakistan in order to save face for India. This means that all those opposed to this had scant regard for the prestige of India.

Attempts at Assassination before Independence

We have seen in the preceding chapter the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi on partition, based on his speeches, statements and the narratives he gave to Rajaji about the details of his discussions with Jinnah. All this evidence proves that Gandhiji was opposed to partition tooth and nail. We have also seen that Sardar Patel gave his approval first to the partition after he had a bitter experience with Muslim League Ministers in the Ad-hoc Government, and thereafter Nehru agreed to the partition. When the issue of giving approval to the partition was put forth before the Congress Working Committee, Gandhiji complained

that he had not been given prior information about it. However, he displayed his moral politics, which was always cherished by him, and said that if Nehru and Patel had given their word, then he would withdraw his opposition to the partition. This amply proves that the claim of the Hindutva forces, that Gandhi caused the partition, is utterly false. It is also claimed that the partition took place because Gandhiji appeased Muslims and hence he was murdered. Such claims are made with malafide intentions of garnering the sympathies of the people for the conspiracy to murder Gandhi and by spreading the poison of hatred against Muslims in the minds of the people. Thereafter, the question of Rs 55 crores was used. Mahatma Gandhi had expressed his opinion that we had entered into an agreement with Pakistan for the payment of Rs 55 crores and if we did not keep our word, it would damage the prestige of India. This was befitting the moral politics of Gandhiji. Sardar Patel took the stance of refusing the payment because of his anger against Pakistan and Muslims. This kind of attitude was never approved by Gandhiji because of his politics of morality. One can understand the ideological differences between those who disapproved of morality in politics and Gandhiji, who cherished a politics of morality, but no cultured mind will approve that Gandhiji should have been murdered for such differences of opinion. However, those who have faith in violence cannot be expected to remain consistent in their ideology.

We have also to differentiate between types of violence. There is a difference between the violence of the Naxalites and violence at a personal level in politics. Not even the violence of Naxalites can eliminate poverty. Yet, there is a difference between the violence perpetrated by Naxalites against landlords and moneylenders, and the violence perpetrated by Hindutva forces against individuals. It is a part of the violence of Hindutva forces that if one does not agree with their ideology, one must be killed. The violence of Naxalites is aimed at eliminating the exploiters or to compel them to abandon their ownership of land and to stop exploitation. While no violence should be supported, still one must differentiate between types of violence. The hunger strike undertaken by Gandhiji on 13 January 1948 was not for Rs 55 crores. This was a part of the false propaganda of the Hindutva forces. One can understand this clearly if one considers the conditions put forth by Gandhiji for withdrawing his hunger strike, which were declared as approved. All the facts ought to have been consistently put forth before the masses. But it did not happen and the Hindutva forces took advantage of the tendency amongst the masses to forget the past and of the ignorance of history of the new generations. Because of the false propaganda of the Hindutva forces, the common man has started believing that Gandhiji brought pressure by resorting to a hunger strike for the payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. However, none of these issues had even arisen then, and yet a question remains as to why the attempts to murder Gandhi were made.

Mahatma Gandhi arrived at Pune on 19 June 1934 while he was on the campaign for eradication of untouchability. A bomb was hurled at him on 25 June by Hindutva forces. The questions of partition and payment of money to Pakistan did not exist in 1934. Pyarelal has given this information in his book *Last Phase* (volume 2) and more details about this bomb blast have been given by Mr D.G. Tendulkar in his book *Mahatma* (volume 2). The said bomb was thrown at Gandhiji on 25 June 1934 while he was proceeding towards the Municipal Hall for a speech. A total of seven persons, including two police constables and the chief officers of the Municipality, were seriously injured in the bomb blast. Mahatma Gandhi was saved because he was in a different motor car. According to Tendulkar, he escaped the attack by sheer luck. Pyarelal comments that the said action was well-planned. This means that there were attempts to murder Gandhiji even before 25 June, which might not have been planned with adequate precautions. Gandhiji himself said, after another such attempt, that he came back from the doors of death seven times by the grace of God. If one considers the comments of Pyarelal about the well-planned action of 25 June 1934, Gandhiji's statement acquires significance. Pyarelal said further, 'These people had concealed the photographs of Nehru and some other Congress leaders in their shoes. Those persons were being trained to shoot bullets on targets by displaying the photographs of Gandhiji. The said group only murdered Gandhi at the time when he was attempting to bring about peace (after the hunger strike of Delhi).' Pyarelal has not mentioned the name of Nathuram Godse in the said incident. However, he has said that the same group which hurled the bomb on Gandhiji, killed him later. It is therefore evident that Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte's group must have had a hand in the bomb blast of 1934. Besides, Pyarelal mentioned that the photographs of Gandhiji, Nehru and other Congress leaders were found in the shoes of the attackers. Hence, it can be safely argued that these attackers might have been arrested by the police and hence what was concealed in their shoes came to light. All these facts are crystal clear and substantiate my claim that Gandhiji was not murdered for the partition and Rs 55 crore.

In the speech given by Gandhiji after this bomb blast, he said,

> It is unfortunate that this incident should take place when I was engaged in the work of Harijans. I do not wish to become a martyr. But I am ready if the time demands. To kill me is a very easy task. But why you kill innocent persons in an attempt of murdering me. My wife and three girls, who are like my daughters, were in my car. What wrong have they committed?

This attempt was also intended to kill Gandhiji.

People think that the bombing of 20 January 1948 was the first attempt. This is totally wrong. When a bomb was thrown at Mahatma Gandhi at Pune, Mr L.B. Bhopatkar was there. A public meeting was organized

at the Maharashtra Mandal of Pune presided over by Tatyasaheb Kelkar for congratulating Bhopatkar because he had escaped the bomb blast. Most of the newspapers of that time had published the news stating that the bomb attack of 25 June 1934 was aimed at killing Mahatma Gandhi. But Bhopatkar was congratulated in the said meeting. While speaking in the meeting, Bhopatkar said that the reports published in the newspapers about the incident of the bomb were not true (*Daily Sakal*, 2 July 1934). He tried to seek political mileage from the incident of the bomb blast. He claimed that the blast was aimed at killing him. He also claimed that the bomb was not aimed at Mahatma Gandhi. However, the justification he gave for his claim was ridiculous. Bhopatkar said that if the bomb was aimed at killing Mahatma Gandhi, then it would have been thrown again when Gandhiji returned in the evening at about 7.30 (*Daily Sakal*, 11 July 1934). The bomb blast took place before Gandhi's arrival and Bhopatkar was there at that time and hence he claimed that it was an attack aimed to kill him. He also argued that if the aim was to kill Gandhiji, then the attackers would have thrown the bomb again after knowing that Gandhiji had escaped the earlier attempt. However, they did not throw a second bomb and hence it was not an attack on Gandhiji. What an illogical argument! Nobody possessing even a shred of common sense can believe this argument. When the said bomb was hurled, Mr Vitthal Shridhar Joglekar, a reporter of the newspaper *Dnyanprakash*, published by the Servants of India Society and established by Namdar Gokhale, was present at the place. The information given to me by Mr Joglekar was this:

> A bomb was thrown at Gandhiji while he was arriving. But Gandhiji was in the motor which was behind the motor damaged due to the blast. The man who threw the bomb ran away. Hence, his identity could not be known. Mr Bhopatkar was there when the blast took place. He suffered a minor injury. Bhopatkar told that he had sustained some minor injury.

However, it was reported in the daily *Sakal* dated 2 July 1934 that in the meeting held for congratulating Mr Bhopatkar, he had said that he became unconscious. This report appears contradictory to what Joglekar told me. If Bhopatkar had become unconscious, he could not have shown his injury to Joglekar. The programme had been organized by the Pune Municipality to honour Gandhiji and it was not a programme for Mr Bhopatkar. Hence, the person who threw the bomb would not have been aware that Bhopatkar was to attend the programme. Another reason for the falsehood of Bhopatkar's claim is that he was not so important a person; one more reason is that the attackers were not aware that Mr Bhopatkar was to attend the programme. Hence, there is not an iota of doubt that the said bomb was meant for Gandhiji alone. Mr Bhoparkar might have tried to mislead the investigations by claiming that the attack was aimed at him. Mr Joglekar, who was the then reporter

of *Dnyanprakash*, also told me that earlier he was in the Hindu Mahasabha. After leaving *Dnyanprakash*, Joglekar worked in *Agrani* of Nathuram Godse. Hence, Joglekar was telling the truth that Bhopatkar had shown him the injury sustained by him. But Bhopatkar claimed in his speech in the congratulatory meeting that he fell unconscious in the said bomb blast.

It is evident from the editorials that the daily *Sakal* had taken the side of the orthodox forces. In its editorial titled 'Critics Angry over the Bomb' dated 2 July 1934, *Sakal* had said,

> The critics of the bomb blast, which took place at the time of honouring Gandhiji, and those who were condemning the incident, have been engulfed with the fire of anger. They are condemning the Brahmins. They should recollect what organized riots were committed by the so-called 'Satyashodhak' people against the Brahmins once upon a time in Satara, and whether they have condemned it any time.

The editors of *Sakal* were mourning now for the non-condemnation of atrocities committed against Brahmins once upon a time. However, they conveniently forgot that the incident of the attack on Gandhiji was very recent and it was natural that it was condemned. The editors of *Sakal* further said in the editorial,

> It is not possible to suppress the sincere opinions and the selfless work of the orthodox people, who are carrying on movements of their choice, by taking advantage of the bomb blast and wrongly establishing their connection with it. All those who are trying to take opportunity of revenging a particular class, and that too of Brahmins, should remember well that it will never tolerate the atrocities.

One is at a loss to understand why the editors of *Sakal* were issuing such threats, by taking the side of the orthodox forces. They emphasized in the said editorial that no Hindu could murder a leader like Gandhiji. But the fact remains that Gandhiji was murdered by a group nurturing orthodox tendencies, and that too from Pune. Hence, one can draw a conclusion about whom the editors of *Sakal* supported.

There were letters published in *Sakal* condemning it for taking the side of orthodox elements. A letter by Shankar Raghoji Mohite criticizing the editors of *Sakal* was published on 7 July 1934. Mr Mohite said that it was not an editorial but the editors were acting like somebody's spokespersons. The attack on Mahatma Gandhi in 1934 was condemned everywhere. A meeting for condemning the attack was convened on 15 July 1934 at Kolhapur. Shri Shivling Haveri was permitted to convene the meeting by the District Magistrate on the ground that the Mahatma was saved in the Pune bomb blast. The news pertaining to this was published in *Sakal* of 14 July. In the editorial of *Sakal* dated 16 July 1934, it was stated that, 'As suggested by Seth Jamna-

lal Bajaj, the prayer meetings were held all over the country yesterday (15th July) and Mahatma Gandhi was congratulated for escaping the attack of 25th June.' However, the editors had taken the side of orthodox elements. In the said editorial of 16 July 1934, mention was made of the news published in the *Times of India* about the arrest of an orthodox person who had attempted to kill Gandhiji at Karachi. It was mentioned in the *Times of India* that there was a danger to the life of Mahatma Gandhi at Karachi. An orthodox person carrying an axe was proceeding to meet him, but he was arrested by the police in time and the axe was confiscated. This shows that the orthodox elements were angry not only with Mahatma Gandhi, but also with his volunteers. The volunteers were also being assaulted by them. In *Sakal* dated 19 July 1934, news was published stating that the volunteers were attacked and assaulted by the orthodox elements at Kanpur, when they were returning from a meeting in which Gandhiji had been felicitated.

News about the activities of the orthodox elements were published in detail in *Sakal*. From these news items, we get detailed information about how the orthodox elements were thinking of murdering Gandhiji and their attempts were being unsuccessful. The news published in *Sakal* in its edition of 20 July 1934 is worth reading.

It says that on 15 July at Kashi, the president of the committee constituted for boycotting Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Kamalnayanachary, had recently declared that there should be a boycott of Gandhiji in Kashi in such proportion and intensity that the high-profile politicians not only in Hindustan, but also in England, should become aghast. The said news item was talking about boycotting Gandhiji. However, it suggested committing an act which would have had a tremendous impact in England as well as in India. The suggestion appears to have been aimed not only at a boycott but at something more serious. It was stated, 'There has been a propaganda, by issuing different bulletins, that the movement of Mahatma Gandhi was a threat to the very existence of orthodox religion and hence, every orthodox person must try his hand to save the life of orthodox religion.'

News from Lahore was published in the edition of *Sakal* dated 23 July 1934 under the titles, 'Invitation from the God of Death and from Jail', 'Mahatmaji Said', 'Wrist of Mahatma Gandhi Was Twisted at Lahore', 'Extremism of a Hindu Youth' and 'Not Willing to Leave the Hand of Gandhiji'. The news items also described the huge crowd that had gathered for Gandhi's welcome and said further,

> While the motor car started moving on the road, some Hindu youths ascended the stairs of the car. One of them held a hand of Mahatma Gandhi and thrust a paper into his hand and said that Gandhiji should read that paper immediately. Gandhiji asked him to leave his hand and promised that

> he would read the paper invariably. The youth did not leave his hand even after that. Then, there was a commotion in the crowd and Gandhiji's wrist was sprained. Gandhi told him again that he should release his hand since it started aching and told the youth that he would get down from the car if the youth was not willing to release his hand. Even then, the youth did not release the hand of Gandhiji. (*Sakal*, 23 July 1934)

It is evident from the *Sakal* editorials that it was a sympathizer of orthodox elements. I have relied on news published in *Sakal* relating to Mahatma Gandhi. One can conclude that the news might have been published by resorting to adopting a formal attitude. Still, one can understand how aggressive the orthodox elements, i.e. the Hindutva forces, acting against Gandhiji were. The news from Kashi makes it clear that serious action other than a mere boycott was being contemplated by the Hindutva forces.

An orthodox person had proceeded to attack Gandhiji at Karachi and he was arrested. This news tells much more than the description of the incident. The news from Kashi had said that the movement of Mahatma Gandhi was a threat to the very existence of orthodox religion and hence everyone must try hard to eliminate that calamity. It proves that the Hindutva forces were opposing the all-inclusive policy of Mahatma Gandhi and they had resolved to do away with the hurdle of Gandhi's ideology and his movement. This is the reason why Gandhiji was murdered on 30 January 1948. There were attempts to accomplish this since 1934. The bomb hurled at Gandhiji on 25 June 1934 was also an attempt to kill him. All these apparent evidences are given by the news items referred to above. What more evidence do we need to prove that Mahatma Gandhi was not murdered for the partition or Rs 55 crore? Gandhiji and his ideology were opposed more intensely at Pune than at other places of the country. It was here that Lokmanya Tilak secured the leadership of India on the strength of his capability. Is it possible that Gandhiji and his ideology were opposed more intensely from Pune because the city was afflicted with fear after the death of Lokmanya Tilak?

It was fortunate for India and also for the world that Gandhiji escaped the attack of 25 June 1934. This has been mentioned by Shripad Joshi in his book *Gandhiji: A Glimpse*. Shripad Joshi was present at the place of the bomb blast. Acharya S.D. Javdekar has said, in connection with this attack, in his book *Jeevan Rahasya* that,

> This bomb was thrown by a person claiming himself as orthodox, to express annoyance about the work of Gandhiji for the emancipation of the Harijans, while he was proceeding to accept the honour. The people who claimed themselves to be orthodox Hindus were feeling that the Hindu religion could be saved only by eliminating Gandhiji.

Mahatma Gandhi was not murdered for the partition and the issue of Rs 55 crores, but he was killed as his philosophy was responsible for restraining he Hindutva ideology. By raising these false issues a systematic campaign is undertaken to gain support for those who murdered Gandhi.

There were four attempts at killing Gandhi before the bomb blast of 20 January 1948, and Gandhiji said that he escaped the claws of death seven times. A bomb was thrown on the first car at Pune, assuming that Gandhiji would be travelling in that car. This proves that the conspiracy was not hatched after 1947 but thirteen years prior to that by the Hindutva forces.

A bomb was thrown to kill Gandhi in Pune in June 1934. Thereafter, in 1944, Nathuram Godse was arrested at Panchgani as he was hurrying towards Gandhiji carrying a knife. This statement has been made before the Justice Kapur Commission by the owner of Surati Lodge of Pune, Shri Manishankar Purohit. Shri B.D. Bhilare Guruji, ex-MLA of the Congress from Mahabaleshwar, who was present, has also said that he took away the knife from the hand of Nathuram Godse (monthly *Anubhav*, Pune, October 1997). The Justice Kapur Commission concluded that this incident did not happen on the basis of the police diary. However, it will be discussed subsequently how the said police diary cannot be believed with regard to some other incidents as well. The Commission concluded that the information given by Mr Purohit was not reliable since Dr Sushila Nair was with Mahatma Gandhi and hence she ought to have been aware of the incident. While deposing before the Commission, she had said that she did not remember anything. This argument of the Commission seems fallacious. Because the same Dr Sushila Nair subsequently told the Commission that Nathuram Godse was caught with a knife by the people of Sevagram Ashram, and that he carried the knife so as to take Gandhiji's life. But the Commission did not take her statement seriously. While the details of this incident are discussed subsequently, it is mentioned here to show that the Commission's argument that the incident at Panchgani did not happen just because it was not supported by Sushila Nair was wrong, and it did not believe the incident of Sevagram even though Dr Nair had narrated it. Thus, the conclusion drawn by the Commission that Nathuram carried the said knife for puncturing the tyre of Gandhiji's car is ridiculous.

I was seven or eight years old when Gandhiji was murdered. In those days, even in a city like Kolhapur, people murmured that they were aware, even prior to the murder, that Gandhiji was going to be murdered. Even as small children we heard this discussion, so one can imagine how openly it was discussed. A question arose in my mind even at that time, as to why Gandhiji's life was not saved in spite of the availability of information that he was to be murdered. I did not get an answer. Thereafter, I forgot the question for about ten to twelve years. I took to journalism and started staying near Shivaji Park, Bombay, in the house of my relative, Gangadharrao Deshpande. There, a Con-

gress activist used to visit regularly. I befriended him. The two of us would go for evening walks around Shivaji Park and he always pointed towards a small bungalow and said that Prof. Jain stayed there. He told me that Prof. Jain was aware of the murder of Gandhi even before the murder took place. However, he could not tell me how Prof. Jain got that information. The question then rose again in my mind. I thought to visit Prof. Jain and seek the information. Thereafter, I got preoccupied with the politics of 'Sanyukta Maharashtra' and the question remained unanswered.

In the year 1966–67, the Justice J.L. Kapur Commission was appointed to investigate the conspiracy belind the murder of Gandhiji. I was present, in person, for reporting on the working of the Commission. Before the appointment of the Commission, the central government had appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of a legal expert, Shri G.S. Pathak, on 22 March 1965. In the same month, Mr Pathak was inducted into the central Cabinet. He subsequently became the Vice President of India. Hence, the one-member Justice J.L. Kapur Commission came into being on 21 November 1966. I was the lone journalist covering the Commission. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Shri Morarji Desai, Prof. J.C. Jain, the Assistant Commissioner of Police Mr J.D. Nagarwala, and other high officers and leaders deposed before the Commission. I heard them. The deposition of Gopal Godse, however, was taken *in camera*. Hence I could not hear the same. Thereafter, I had the opportunity to examine the evidence and papers put forth before the Commission, and then the question which arose in my mind at the age of seven or eight was finally answered.

Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail in May 1944. But he had malaria. He came to Panchgani in July 1944 for rest and recuperation as advised by doctors. At that time, a group consisting of eighteen to twenty persons came to Panchgani by a special bus from Pune and shouted slogans against Gandhiji the whole day. Gandhiji came to know of this. He called Nathuram Godse to hear him out. However, Godse refused to meet Gandhiji. In the evening, when the prayer meeting started, a young man wearing a Nehru shirt, pajama and jacket rushed towards Gandhiji shouting slogans against him and taking a knife out of the pocket of his jacket. Manishankar Purohit and Bhilare Guruji of Satara caught the said young person, who was Nathuram Godse. There was another young man with him but he ran away. There was commotion in the prayer meeting. But Gandhiji remained quiet and his prayer meeting was conducted as usual. Gandhiji sent a message to Nathuram Godse and invited him to stay with him for eight days, so that he could understand his thinking. However, Godse refused that also. Gopal Godse deposed before the Justice Kapur Commission that Nathuram Godse did not go to Panchgani. It is arguable whether Gopal Godse was telling the truth. Mr Joglekar, who was the reporter of *Agrani*, informed me that Nathuram had told them that

some important news would be received from Panchgani while Gandhiji was there, and, accordingly, the news was received from Panchgani. The Congress volunteers took greater precautions and deployed plainclothes police constables at the Dilkhush bungalow where Gandhiji was staying. This security arrangement was made after the said incident. However, Gandhiji objected to this security measure. Gandhiji told them that policemen were not required for his security. Rajaji, Dr Jeevraj Mehta, Bhulabhai Desai and some other Congress leaders were aware of this. The news was published in the 23 July 1944 edition of *The Times of India*, titled 'The People of RSS Created Havoc in the Meeting of Gandhiji'. Mr A. David, editor of *Poona Herald*, filed an affidavit before the Justice Kapur Commission and deposed that Nathuram Godse had rushed towards Gandhi carrying a knife with the intention of killing him on that day at Panchgani. There is a slight difference in the dates in the deposition of Manishankar Purohit. Purohit had given the names of Mr Apte and Mr Thatte also. Dr Sushila Nair had said that some people created a commotion in the prayer meeting at Panchgani held in July 1944, but she could not recollect whether Nathuram Godse was among them. Pyarelal was not there at Panchgani and Sushila Nair had been taken aside when the incident happened. Hence she could not witness what had actually happened. Dr Nair deposed that she did not remember whether Nathuram Godse was there, but she also deposed that Nathuram Godse and Mr Thatte were stopped by the residents of the Ashram when they charged towards Gandhiji in 1946 at Sevagram. She also stated that a knife was found on one of them. There is no mention in the police records of a knife being found at Panchgani. One possibility may be that the police arrived there after the knife was recovered. Hence the police might not have taken note of the same, or they might not have recorded it in apprehension of disciplinary action for the knife being found when the police were present. This possibility cannot be ruled out. Mr Purohit had nothing to gain by giving false testimony.

In 1934, a bomb attack took place on Gandhiji at Pune. Pyarelal and Mr Tendulkar both stated that seven persons were injured in the said attack and that it was a well-planned scheme. According to Pyarelal, the persons who murdered Gandhiji on 30 January 1948 were the same persons who participated in the bomb blast of 1934. The same names emerged in the incident at Panchgani also. It is evident from the bomb blast of 1934 that a group from Pune was attempting to murder Gandhiji. In such circumstances, everyone is free to draw their own conclusion about what would have happened at Panchgani. Pyarelal himself deposed before the Commission that people of the RSS had 'infiltrated' the police. This is worth taking into consideration in relation to the incident at Panchgani.

The Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had sent a letter to the Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, on 26 February 1948. In the said

letter he informed Patel that there were many people of the RSS in the Delhi police force. To quote his words, 'the people of RSS have infiltrated in our offices and the police force and hence the secret information does not remain secret from these people'. Sardar Patel replied to Nehru on the very next day, i.e. 27 February 1948. In that letter, Patel admitted that 'a group of Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Savarkar, hatched a conspiracy to murder Gandhiji and executed it' (*Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, volume 6, p. 56).

A bomb was thrown near the building of a library situated in the heart of Pune on 26 June 1947, i.e. after the bomb blast in Pune in June 1934. In the said incident, a person named N.R. Athavale was arrested. He was an activist of the Hindu Mahasabha. In his confession, Mr Athavale admitted that Mr Narayan Apte of *Agrani* had told him to throw the bomb.[25] A bomb was thrown in the meeting of socialist leader Raosaheb Patwardhan at Ahmednagar by Madanlal and Karkare. The government issued orders on 16 January 1947 for arresting Madanlal and on 24 January 1947 for arresting Karkare. The District Magistrate did not arrest Madanlal and Karkare, and the Kapur Commission has expressed displeasure about this.

Hindutva forces had resorted to bomb attacks from time to time since 1934. The names of Karkare, Apte and Madanlal figured in these attacks. The orders for arresting Madanlal and Karkare were not executed in the bomb blast incident at Pune; Mr Athavale had given the name of Apte and therefore one cannot but appreciate the wisdom of the police, who assumed that the attackers undertook the attack by leaving evidence in Apte's house. If Madanlal Pahawa and Karkare had been arrested on 16 and 24 January 1947, after the bomb blast in the meeting of Raosaheb Patwardhan, the conspiracy to murder Gandhiji on 30 January would have come to light. The police did not arrest Pahawa and Karkare. If we take into consideration this behaviour of the police, we cannot conclude that the incident at Panchgani did not happen since it was not recorded by the police.

The Kapur Commission did not give credence to the Panchgani incident. Hence, it can be assumed that it is a disputed incident. However, there is no such doubt or confusion about the incident at Sevagram. It was declared that Gandhiji was to negotiate with Jinnah. Nathuram Godse and L.G. Thatte and others were saying that Gandhiji should not negotiate with Jinnah, and both of them indulged in poisonous propaganda about this. Mahatma Gandhi started the discussion with Jinnah on 9 September 1944. It went on for eighteen days. For this discussion, Gandhi proceeded to Bombay from Sevagram. Godse and Thatte had resolved not to allow this discussion to take place. Hence, Godse, Thatte and their accomplices decided to stop Gandhiji near the Ashram.

The scheme was meant to prevent Gandhiji from leaving the Ashram. The group from Maharashtra was joined by 57 persons from Bengal. Hence, Godse, Thatte and their accomplices became more aggressive. Dr Sushila

Nair deposed before the Justice Kapur Commission that the residents of the Ashram had seized a big knife from both of them. However, the Commission did not accept the information given by her. Earlier, the Commission had refused to accept the information given by Sushila Nair because she did not substantiate the information; here, Sushila Nair said that a knife was seized. Even the records of the police revealed that the police had seized a large-sized weapon from both of them. The police did not mention a knife. However, police records mention a large-sized weapon and the said weapon might have been bigger than a knife. Why was this weapon carried? The police had said, while deposing before the Justice Kapur Commission, that the weapon was carried for puncturing the tyre of the car by which Gandhiji was to travel to Wardha railway station. This was accepted by the Commission. However, it is recorded in the diary of the police that Thatte had told the police that they had carried this weapon for self-defence. The police did not give this information to the Commission, but deposed that the weapon was meant for puncturing the car tyre. If the contradictions contained in the information given by the police are considered, the attempts made by them to conceal information come to light. The Commission said, 'When Thatte and other demonstrators were arrested, some conversation took place between a policeman and Thatte.' This conversation was also quoted by the Commission. A police officer had asked Thatte whether they intended to kill Gandhiji. Thatte had said that if he killed Gandhiji, Gandhiji would become a martyr. The knife was found on Thatte when this conversation was going on.

The attitude of the Hindutva forces towards Gandhiji, their aggressive and poisonous speeches, the bomb attack on Gandhiji at Pune in 1934 and the fact that they were discussing the murder of Gandhiji while they were in the Sevagram police station, proves that they were hatching a conspiracy. The police had informed the Commission about this conversation. However, while deposing before the Commission, the police stated that the knife was carried for puncturing the car tyre. One cannot understand on what basis the police drew this conclusion. Moreover, the orders issued for arresting Madanlal Pahawa and Karkare for causing a bomb blast in the meeting of Raosaheb Patwardhan were not implemented. Hence, there is ample room for doubt about the records of the police. The Commission has referred to the statement of K.M. Munshi in connection with the incident at Sevagram. It says, 'there was an anti-Gandhi group in Pune and Munshi had said that the said group believed in political murders'. The Commission has not stated its opinion but it speaks through Mr Munshi, and this does not befit the prestige of the Judge. There were several examples of attacks on Gandhiji by Hindutva forces in Pune and hence the Commission should have drawn the conclusion straightaway; but it reserved its opinion and only referred to the statement of Mr Munshi.

Why the Commission adopted this attitude can be imagined. I had a

good rapport with Justice Kapur while I was reporting about the Commission. Many a time, Justice Kapur would call me to his chamber in the Mantralaya after the work of the Commission ended for the day, and we talked. Once he said, 'What will emerge from all this? Most of the persons involved in the murder of Gandhiji are not alive today. I have a question, how long will they live who are now alive? Hence, my report would be an ordinary report.' I do not remember the date, but I remember the conversation. The deposition of Gopal Godse was conducted on the first day and on the same day, Justice Kapur said this to me. He told me the essence of the deposition of Gopal Godse. Justice Kapur would give authentic information about the *in camera* deposition later on.

Pyarelal had written a letter immediately to Tej Bahadur Sapru about the incident at Sevagram. In this detailed letter, Pyarelal says,

> You must have read the news about the demonstrations held by the volunteers of Hindu Mahasabha. On the first day of the demonstration, a leader of the demonstrators said that this was their first step and they would not hesitate to use force if Gandhi went to meet Jinnah. They had informed so earlier also. They had said, they would catch hold of Gandhiji as soon as he moves out of the Ashram and they would not allow Gandhiji to step out of the Ashram yard. In fact, they had deployed groups of volunteers at strategic places outside the Ashram also.
>
> Today morning, I received a telephone call from the District Superintendent of Police. He said on phone that the demonstrators had planned to do something serious and hence he was compelled to take action against the demonstrators. Gandhi went to the extent of saying that he would walk up along with the demonstrators alone. He told that he would walk up along with them till they were reformed and till they voluntarily allow Gandhiji to go by motor. Gandhiji was firm on his decision. The DSP arrived there before the time of Gandhiji's departure and arrested the demonstrators. Hence the plan of the demonstrators fizzled out.
>
> Again, the leader of the demonstrators was a fanatic person and of extremist thoughts and violent by nature. Hence, we were much worried. When his personal search was conducted, a large lethal weapon was found with him. He was arrested by the police. At that time, the police officer who arrested him asked him sarcastically whether he was trying to become a martyr. The leader of the demonstrators said that when Gandhi would be murdered, some of them would be martyrs. The police officer continued the conversation and asked him further why they were resorting to such activities. He also said that they should entrust the matter upon their leaders who would take necessary action. He also suggested that they should entrust the matter to Savarkar who would take necessary action. However, the arrested

> person said that Savarkar talking to Gandhiji would amount to bestowing an honour on Gandhiji. He also said that a time would not come for this and added further that instead of Savarkar talking to Gandhi, an ordinary volunteer like him was enough to deal with Gandhiji.

This letter was sent to Tej Bahadur Sapru by Pyarelal taking into consideration the seriousness of this incident. Pyarelal has said that the person who claimed to be an ordinary volunteer was Nathuram Godse himself. This means that the plan to kill Gandhiji was not hatched in the year 1948. The said group had planned it much earlier since Gandhiji wanted to proceed to Bombay in September 1944 to negotiate with Jinnah, and this group was determined to even use force to prevent Gandhiji from proceeding to Bombay for the negotiations. The said group might have gone to the extent of attacking if the DSP had not arrived in time. It was because of this that Pyarelal was worried. The DSP had also realized the seriousness of the incident and informed Pyarelal on the phone.

The negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah started at the residence of Jinnah at Mount Pleasant Road in Bombay. (Today, the name of that road has been changed to Bhausaheb Hire Marg, and that bungalow is located at the opposite side of Varsha, the residence of the Chief Minister.)

The same question arises once again. The country had not been partitioned in September 1944 and the question of 55 crore rupees was not in existence then. Then, why did this incident happen at all, which endangered the life of Gandhiji? At that time, it was not only Pyarelal who felt that there was a possibility of a serious attack on Gandhiji, but even the DSP had the same information. What were the objects of these incidents? In these circumstances, nothing was clear about the partition of the country and the issue of 55 crore rupees. Hence, the reason which is being put forth for murdering Gandhiji is false and there is much evidence to prove this.

The police had recorded the confession of Nathuram claiming that he had carried the weapon for self-defence.[26] The Kapur Commission was not even informed about the notes taken by the police when the Sepetember 1944 incident had happened. The police told the Commission that the large weapon was carried to puncture tyres of the car in which Mahatma Gandhi was to travel. The person who carried the weapon had claimed to do so for self-defence. Why then was the Commission not provided with this information? While accepting the statement of Mr Munshi, the Kapur Commission also accepted the claims made by the police. That is why nobody can believe that the incident at Panchgani did not take place only because it was not recorded in the police diary.

The Hindutva group at Pune had determined to kill Gandhiji. This is proved beyond doubt because of their consistent efforts. A bomb attack was

carried out in 1934 at Pune. There was a threat to the life of Gandhiji at Sevagram in 1944. The person who rushed towards Gandhiji at Panchgani carrying a weapon was Nathuram Godse, which is confirmed by Manishankar Purohit and the editor of *Poona Herald*, Mr David. On 29 June 1946, Gandhiji was travelling by train to Pune from Bombay and there was a huge pile of debris on the railway track between Neral and Karjat stations, with the intention of killing Gandhiji in an accident which would have definitely taken place on the railway track.[27] However, the accident was averted because of the alertness of a motorman, Mr M.L. Pareira. Yet the railway engine was severely damaged. Pyarelal wrote an article in the 7 July 1946 edition of *Harijan* about this incident. He said:

> The railway train which carried Mahatma Gandhi collided with the heaps of debris piled up across the railway track in the night of 29th June, when the said special train was in full speed. The said debris were deliberately piled up across the track. The accident was averted only because of the alertness of the engine driver. Otherwise, there would have been damage to the life of Gandhiji and others because of the accident. The police of Pune deposed before the Commission about this incident and said that somebody had piled up debris on the track with intentions of sabotaging a goods train. However, at the time when the train named as 'Gandhi-Special' (the engine driver, Mr Pereira, had deposed before the Commission that the said train was named so) was to proceed on the said track, no goods strain was scheduled to proceed on the same track prior to or after the train of Gandhiji.

Hence, it cannot be believed that the debris was piled up with the intention of sabotaging a goods train. Mahatma Gandhi had mentioned the said incident while speaking in the prayer meeting of 30 June 1946 at Pune.[28] He said,

> I have hoodwinked death for seven times by the grace of God. I have never hurt anybody any time. I have no enmity with anybody. I do not understand why so many efforts are being made to take my life. The attempt of taking my life yesterday, has fizzled out. I will not die so early. I am going to live for hundred and twenty five years.

When Gandhiji said that he would live for 125 years, Nathuram Godse asked him as to who would allow him to live that long. From the said utterance of Nathuram Godse, it is proved that the plan of murdering Gandhi had been brewing in his mind since a long time. This is also evident from the incidents that took place earlier. One cannot believe the deposition of the police which was made before the Commission that the debris was piled up across the railway track on 29 June 1946 with an intention of sabotaging a goods train. One could have believed it if there were many attempts of plundering goods trains on this track earlier, or the said area was prone to such incidents.

One could have believed it if a goods train were to proceed on the said track either prior to the 'Gandhi Special' or thereafter on 29 June 1946. However, nothing of this sort happened; hence, the reason given by the police appears to be totally false.

The Hindutva forces were indulging in propaganda against Mahatma Gandhi and the propaganda was of a very low kind. It was also explosive. An example of such propaganda can be cited from the incidents in Alwar. The Prime Minister of the princely state of Alwar was Dr N.B. Khare. He was one of the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha and a staunch opponent of Gandhiji. He was also well known for his habit of making inflammatory statements and circulating such pamphlets. Some of these pamphlets propagating against Gandhiji were presented before the Kapur Commission. One of them was a poster in Hindi, in which the murder of Gandhi was directly instigated. The Commission admitted this poster as evidence. The language of the poster went thus: 'Cut the body of Mahatma Gandhi into pieces and throw these pieces before the crows and dogs for eating.' After the murder of Gandhiji, the police were sent to Alwar from Delhi for investigation and the chief police officer of Alwar, Mr U.L. Malhotra, was asked to investigate. In the said investigation, it was revealed that a person named Nathuram Shukla from Nagpur had visited Alwar. In the month of December 1947, he gave speeches from the platform of the Hindu Mahasabha. The description given of this Nathuram Shukla did not tally with the description of Nathuram Godse. It is difficult to say whether the description of Shukla was wrong or whether that man was somebody else. However, a monk named Giridhar Siddha had visited Alwar. He carried printed letters and he was distributing them amongst some people. The murder of Gandhiji took place at 5 o'clock in the evening of 30 January 1948, but it was stated in those printed letters that the murder took place at 3 o'clock. These printed letters were being distributed on 30 January itself. An anti-Gandhi atmosphere was created in Alwar. The Justice Kapur Commission has stated that it was difficult for the Commission to conclude with certainty whether Dr N.B. Khare was involved in the propaganda against Gandhiji. The attitude of the Kapur Commission appears equivocal about the involvement of Dr Khare, but it has suggested that Dr Khare was involved.

The Hindutva forces believed in personal violence because they did not have a competent ideology to counter the ideology of Gandhi. Such absurdity arises whenever any orthodox thought faces defeat in the face of progressive thought, and when people refuse to accept new changes. The Hindutva forces did not have a strong ideology to counter their opponents' ideology and hence they resorted to collecting weapons and bombs.

The Hindutva forces did not even hesitate to attack Hindus in rural areas in order to create hatred in the minds of Hindus against Muslims. Mr B.B.S. Jaitly, DIG of Meerut Range, deposed before the Justice Kapur Com-

mission and gave information to the Commission that there were cases filed against more than 700 activists of the RSS who had conspired to attack selected persons in some of the villages by secretly collecting weapons immediately after Independence. He also said that he had recommended to the government to ban the RSS even before the murder of Gandhiji. Mr Jaitly had also discussed the issue of banning the RSS with the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr Govind Ballabh Pant, and the Home Minister, Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri. Both of them had agreed that it was necessary to ban the RSS. But both said that the matter should be discussed with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The RSS was banned, but only after the murder of Gandhi. Mr Jaitly and Sardar Patel discussed the matter in October–November 1947. At that time, Mr Jaitly told Patel that some very serious incident would take place. However, Mr Jaitly deposed before the Commission that he had information that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would be murdered, and that he did not feel that Gandhiji would be murdered.

I myself had met Madan Lal Pahwa during 1988–89. My object of meeting him was to ascertain whether he was repentant for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. However, I found that he was proud that Gandhiji had been killed. Madan Lal Pahwa told me that they had planned to murder Pandit Nehru, Suhrawardy and Jinnah along with Gandhiji. This substantiates the deposition of Mr B.B.S. Jaitly. Mr Jaitly had seized weapons from the RSS. He tried to show them to Mahatma Gandhi. But, he said, Gandhiji did not even look at the weapons. The Hindutva forces had collected these weapons even before Independence and had also used them. There were four bombing incidents in Ahmednagar district between 24 and 26 November 1947. A bomb blast took place in the Kapad Bazar area during the procession of Moharram on 24 November. Another bomb blast occurred in Vasant Theatre on 7 December. There were bomb blasts near the house of Kazi Subhanbhai on 14 December and at Tatty Darwaja Masjid on 26 December 1947. The bomb blast that took place in the meeting of Raosaheb Patwardhan is not counted here. Mr Morarjibhai Desai, Home Minister of Bombay, had issued orders on 16 January 1948 for arresting Madan Lal. The said orders of Morarji Desai were not implemented and the Justice Kapur Commission has displayed its displeasure. It cannot be said that this was a part of the red-tapism which exists in the administrative machinery. It is justified on the basis of reality to draw the conclusion that the higher officers in the police department had connived with the Hindutva forces. This is the reason why Pyarelal had deposed about the 'infiltration' of the RSS in the Home Department. There were many bomb blasts in Pune prior to the incidents of 30 January 1948. It would have been possible to save the life of Gandhiji if the police department had awakened from its slumber. No one can believe that it was utterly impossible to save the life of Gandhiji if one takes into consideration the authentic information given in the ensuing chapter. The murder of Mahatma Gandhi took place because

of a lack of will among the then rulers and a weak administration. The bullets from the pistol of Nathuram Godse killed Gandhiji. However, lack of will on the part of the then rulers and negligence of the administration were more lethal for Gandhiji than the bullets from that pistol!

Deliberate Negligence

I had heard in my childhood that the information about the murder of Gandhiji was received prior to the murder. I heard the same in my adulthood and it is a strange coincidence that I was fortunate to see the evidence for it with my own eyes. If we look at the behaviour of the leaders of the Congress towards Gandhiji, it must be said that they were ungrateful to him. Some leaders even displayed utter cruelty during his last days. None of these prominent leaders uttered a single word against the vicious propaganda that Gandhiji was responsible for the partition. None of them agreed to learn humanitarianism even after a bomb blast took place in Gandhiji's prayer meeting on 20 January 1948. Gandhiji was an extraordinarily courageous man. One can imagine this from the description given by Mr N.R. Phatak in his book, *Development of Indian Nationalism*. He says,

> The adventures of Gandhiji in the burning city of Delhi while saving the Muslims and appealing to them for maintaining peace, were beyond any human capacity. Once, he entered into the area of thirty–forty thousands of Muslims all alone. He demonstrated similar courage by entering into the crowd assembled in a Masjid. There was no police bandobast when he went to pacify the Muslims. His age was 78 years. If one considers his advanced age, one is awed with wonder knowing his staunch commitment to duty.

It is not bravery to kill an old man who has no security. It is a heinous crime against humanity. Mr Phatak has also said that the newspapers controlled by the Hindus were trying their best to propagate falsehood about Gandhiji's actions. The masses still believe in that false propaganda. The police had arrested a youth from Bombay named Madan Lal Pahwa after the bomb blast that took place in the prayer meeting of 20 January 1948.

The news about this bomb blast was published in the newspapers of 21 January. After reading the news, Prof. J.C. Jain went to meet the Home Minister of Bombay Province, Mr Morarji Desai. Jain had known Madan Lal Pahwa. Prof. Jain used to go to the refugee camps of Chembur to help refugees. Pahwa came into his contact there. Jain had written some books which Madan Lal sold and Jain paid a commission to him. Once Pahwa went to Jain and asked for money, even though Jain had already paid his commission. Jain asked him why he needed money when he had paid him the commission only the previous day. Madan Lal hesitated to disclose the reason. He just said casually that he wanted to go to Delhi. Prof. Jain took Madan Lal to the seashore near Shivaji

Park so as to make him disclose the reason for his Delhi visit. Pahwa told Prof. Jain that he was going to Delhi for murdering a leader. But he hesitated to disclose the name of the leader. Prof. Jain listed the names of some leaders but Pahwa said none of them was the target. At the end, Prof. Jain mentioned the name of Gandhiji. At that, Madan Lal confessed that there was a plan to kill Gandhiji. Prof. Jain was a communist, yet he tried convincing Madan Lal Pahwa not to entertain any thoughts of killing Gandhiji and that Gandhi was a great man. Madan Lal Pahwa pretended to agree with Prof. Jain and went away. Thereafter, he did not meet Prof. Jain for fifteen to twenty days. Prof Jain assumed that Pahwa had spoken ill of Gandhiji just like the other refugees, who had a grudge against Gandhiji because of the agony suffered by them. However, when Prof. Jain read the news of the arrest of Madan Lal Pahwa after the bomb blast of 20 January, he was convinced that there was a plan of killing Gandhiji. Because of this, Prof. Jain sought to meet Morarji Desai and give this information to him. Initially Mr Desai refused to meet Prof. Jain for the reason that the latter was a communist. Then he did meet Prof. Jain in the passage of the Secretariat and listened to his narrative. Mr Morarji Desai also deposed before the Justice Kapur Commission that he had been informed by Prof. Jain on 21 January about the plan of killing Mahatma Gandhi. The Commission levelled an allegation against Prof. Jain only because Prof. Jain did not give this information to the police. The Commission did not take into consideration the possibility that no professor would be willing to go to the police and get himself entangled in interrogations. Moreover, Prof. Jain might not have felt the necessity to register this information with the police when he had briefed the Home Minister himself. The question why Prof. Jain did not inform the police would have arisen if it were the contention of Morarji Desai that Prof. Jain did not give him this information. However, Mr Morarji Desai had agreed that Prof. Jain had in fact given this information to him, and hence it is superfluous to raise this question.

Mr Morarji Desai, in his deposition before the Justice Kapur Commission, said that he told Mr J.D. Nagarwala, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to investigate into the matter on 29 January, and that Mr Morarji Desai himself proceeded to Ahmedabad on the same day to brief Sardar Patel. Mr Morarji Desai stated that he did not consider it proper to give this information to Mr Patel on the telephone in view of its confidential nature. Mr Morarji Desai further deposed that he gave this information to Sardar Patel and that Patel confirmed that he had also received this information through his own sources.[29]

From the deposition of Mr Morarji Desai it can be seen that Sardar Patel had the information about the plan of murdering Gandhiji before 22 January. Moreover, Morarji Desai had also given this information to Sardar

Patel on 22 January. Madan Lal Pahwa was arrested on 20 January and he had given the names of some of his accomplices. The confession of Madan Lal Pahwa was with the Delhi police. The Home Minister of Bombay had given this information to the Central Home Minister, Mr Patel, in a personal meeting, and, as acknowledged by Mr Patel, he had this information even prior to that meeting. Mahatma Gandhi was murdered exactly eight days from the date of the bomb blast committed by Madan Lal.

In view of these facts, the police should not have left any stone unturned and they should have searched the murderers of Gandhiji on the basis of information obtained by them earlier. The Central Home Minister also should have hounded the police force in the matter of the investigation. It is pertinent to note how many steps were taken in that direction. When Morarji Desai told Sardar Patel that there was a plan for Gandhi's murder, Patel confirmed that he had also received this information through his sources. This has also been confirmed by Mr V. Shankar, Patel's secretary, and Patel's daughter, Maniben Patel, in their depositions. Mr Madan Lal Pahwa who carried out the bomb blast in the public meeting of Raosaheb Patwardhan, and Mr Madan Lal Pahwa who carried out the bomb blast in Gandhiji's prayer meeting at Delhi, were one and the same person. He was not arrested before 20 January, even though Mr Morarji Desai himself had ordered his arrest. Even if Madan Lal Pahwa had been arrested in the matter of the bomb blast in the public meeting of Raosaheb Patwardhan, the murder of Mahatma Gandhi could have been averted! Similarly, it would have been very easy to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi if the investigations had been undertaken speedily, taking into consideration the fact that the Madan Lal Pahwa involved in the bomb blast of 20 January 1948 and the Madan Lal Pahwa referred to by Prof. Jain were one and the same person. There were hush-hush discussions going on in certain circles much prior to the murder of Gandhiji. One can assume that nobody believed that it would happen. But the hush-hush discussions ought to have been taken seriously after the bomb blast of 20 January in Gandhiji's prayer meeting. It was the paramount responsibility of the government to take adequate precautions considering the increasing possibility of Gandhiji's murder after the last bomb blast. It was the responsibility especially of the Central Home Ministry.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was aware of the plan to murder Gandhiji even before Morarji Desai had given him the said information. Patel even discussed the matter with Gandhiji. It is true that Gandhiji refused to have police protection. It is also true that Gandhiji threatened that he would leave Delhi if he were provided police *bandobast*. However, the question arises why Sardar Patel listened to Gandhiji's instructions. And whether Gandhiji had instructed only about the police *bandobast*? Sardar Patel and other leaders were appealed to by Mahatma Gandhi to dissolve the Congress Party and transform it into

a public service organization. Not only that, Mahatma Gandhi had prepared a draft resolution about dissolving the Congress Party on 29 January 1948. This was the salient feature of the said draft resolution:

> India has secured political freedom under the leadership of Congress. The present structure and character of the Congress are like the means of propaganda. It has become a machine of the parliamentary processes and hence, the Congress has become an outdated organization. The need of the hour is to keep the Congress away from the competition of political parties. On account of these and other reasons, the Congress should be dissolved and transformed into public service organization.

Mahatma Gandhi was killed on 30 January. Hence the question of putting forth this resolution before the session of the Congress All India Committee did not arise. Therefore, it is strange that Mahatma Gandhi refused to have police *bandobast* and his instructions were promptly obeyed.

It is pertinent to raise the question why the appeal of Mahatma Gandhi to convert the Congress into a public service organization was not heeded to by Sardar Patel. Mahatma Gandhi had also advised that if the Congress was not to be dissolved, then Jayaprakash Narayan or Acharya Narendra Dev should be selected as the president of the Congress. However, Sardar Patel did not agree to this advice also. Why? And why did he agree to the advice of not providing police *bandobast*? Answers to these questions must be obtained. If we get answers to these questions, we may discover how the murder of Gandhiji became possible! A short-time question was asked by A.J. Doddameti in the Assembly of Bombay Province after the murder of Mahatma Gandhi (Question No. 864, dated 20 February 1948). The draft of the answer to this question was prepared by the officers as usual and it was answered in a bureaucratic manner. The answer was that the investigation in the matter of conspiracy of Gandhi's murder was yet to be completed. Hence, the second question about whether prior information was received about the murder was answered in the negative. This answer was also prepared by the officers. Mr Morarji Desai had answered this question himself in the Assembly, after making corrections in the draft in his own handwriting. The answer given by Morarji Desai was thus: 'The government had received the information about Gandhi's murder on 21 January 1948. This information was given to the Home Ministry (i.e. to the Central Home Minister Sardar Patel) on 2 January 1948.' Hence, no doubt can be raised about the fact that Mr Patel had prior information about the murder of Gandhiji.

Mr V. Shankar, secretary to Sardar Patel, said in his deposition that before he gave this information to Morarji Desai, he had also informed Mr Patel that a conspiracy was being hatched in Pune of murdering Gandhiji. It was in Pune that a bomb was thrown on Gandhiji in 1934. It was also in Pune that

an attempt was made to sabotage the railway bogie of Gandhiji. How was the fact forgotten that a lethal weapon was found on the person of L.G. Thatte or Nathuram Godse among the demonstrators against Gandhiji at Sevagram? The Home Ministry had received information prior to 22 January 1948 about the conspiracy being hatched at Pune. The Hindutva forces in Pune had attempted to murder Gandhiji earlier also, and hence, even if the police *bandobast* was not deployed as per the wish of Mahatma Gandhi, he had not opposed the investigation of all concerned persons on the basis of information obtained prior to 22 January. Then, the question remains as to why such investigations were not carried out. It was for this reason that Jayaprakash Narayan raised a question in his numerous public meetings after the murder of Gandhiji. The question was: 'The credit of annexing the Princely States goes to Sardar Patel. The credit also goes to Sardar Patel for the Hyderabad Action. Then who is to be held responsible for the murder of Gandhi?' Sardar Patel had discussed the causes of Gandhiji's murder with Rajaji. It was this,

> Gandhiji had advised to give Rs 55 crore to Pakistan. The conspiracy of Gandhi's murder was the result of the annoyance against this. Mahatma Gandhi had given this advice even when Pakistan was indulging in Military Action against India. Hence, the people of Maharashtra, who were against Gandhiji, felt that Mahatma Gandhi had betrayed the nation by giving such advice in such a critical circumstances and this is an act which is unpardonable. Hence, the conspirators felt that this idiot saint must be eliminated or otherwise the country shall not be freed from his evil influence.[30]

However, Mahatma Gandhi was the only person who asked Sardar Patel, when he went to Gandhiji for advice, as to why the military was not sent to Kashmir up till then even though Kashmir signed the agreement of annexation after the aggression of intruders into Kashmir. Kashmir was independent when the intruders were sent by Pakistan. Hence, the attack on Kashmir was not an attack on India. The opinions put forth by Mr R.K. Patil, a former member of Planning Commission, on this issue should also be taken into consideration. Can it be said now that Sardar Patel did not have sympathies for the murderers? The analysis of the reasons of murder made by Sardar Patel is not true. Attempts to murder Gandhiji were made since 1934; then, what were the reasons for that? And all these attempts were made by the Hindutva forces in Pune. Sardar Patel never tried to answer these questions. The reason of Rs 55 crores is nothing but an alibi for the murder of Gandhiji. If Gandhiji was to be blamed for his appeal to pay Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, why should all those who executed the agreement for giving this amount to Pakistan not to be blamed? The basic question is, who executed this agreement? Did Sardar Patel oppose it? Not at all! Can we assume that the hands of those persons who adopted a stance of sympathizing with the murderers are not stained with

the blood of Mahatma Gandhi? Can we absolve those who blamed Gandhiji for his appeal but gave a clean chit to the executors of the said agreement?

It is pertinent to see the comments of the Justice Kapur Commission about the possibility of saving Gandhiji's life before making an assessment of what activities were being indulged in by the murderers before the actual murder of Gandhiji. There was a bomb blast in the prayer meeting. It was not proper to overlook the possibility of the murder of Gandhiji in view of the information received before the blast, and the information given by Madan Lal himself and Prof. Jain after the bomb blast. There ought to have been efforts to give police protection to Gandhiji by making covert arrangements even if Gandhiji had refused to take police protection.[31] The Justice Kapur Commission has referred to the information as 'information received prior to the blast of 20 January'. It must be kept in mind that the said sentence is mentioned in reference to the fact that Sardar Patel had received the said information before the blast, i.e. before 20 January. The Justice Kapur Commission has discussed the possibility of providing police protection in a manner which would not have been opposed by Gandhiji. Gandhiji would have been given protection by encircling him with plainclothes policemen and loyal activists of the Congress. Or some similar efforts ought to have been made. However, such a simple action was not taken. The Report of the Commission says, 'If Gandhiji was encircled thus, the possibility of Nathuram Godse aiming the pistol right at the chest of Gandhiji would not have been there. It is an obligation of the government to undertake measures by considering all such possibilities.' The governance of Sardar Patel is always appreciated. However, the life of the Father of the Nation could not be saved even though the Home Ministry was in the hands of such a leader! It is not a fact that Gandhiji's murder took place all of a sudden. There was a bomb blast on 20 January. Prior to that Sardar Patel himself said that he had information about the plan to murder Gandhiji. Then, what action was taken within the next ten days apart from asking Gandhiji whether he should be given protection? Against this backdrop, one can understand why Jayaprakash Narayan asked the question as to who was responsible for the murder of Gandhi if the credit for the annexation of the Princely States was given to Sardar Patel.

Gandhiji had begun to realize, even before the partition, that his colleagues were not with him. Barrister Purushottamdas Trikamdas had gone to meet Gandhiji in the first week of January 1948. Trikamdas wanted to tell him that the socialists were thinking of leaving the Congress. At that time, Gandhiji had told him, 'Sardar claims to be my follower. Jawaharlal says that he is my son. Both of them think that I am a mad person.' '*Mera koi sunta nahin hain*' – Gandhiji had said this many times on the issue of partition. He felt himself to be alone on that issue. He had resigned from membership of the Congress when the Congress refused to incorporate the principles of truth

and non-violence in its aims and objectives in 1934. However, when Barrister Purushottamdas Trikamdas told Gandhiji that the socialists had decided to leave the Congress, Gandhiji told him that he should give a message to the socialists not to leave the Congress till his hunger strike was concluded. Gandhiji also told the barrister to convey to the socialists that perhaps Gandhiji might join their party.[32] Barrister Trikamdas himself has confirmed this. Hence it cannot be doubted. There were news reports about Gandhiji being present at the sessions of the Socialist Party.

Mahatma Gandhi might have been attracted towards the Socialist Party. He had some expectations from that party. He was of the opinion that in case the Congress was dissolved, Congressmen interested in constructive work would join the Public Service Organization, and leaders like Nehru who had faith in the ideology of socialism would join the Socialist Party. Gandhiji felt that leaders like Sardar Patel might establish a party of right-wing ideology. This is the reason why Gandhiji might have suggested dissolution of the Congress.

A session of the Congress Socialist Party, within the Congress Party, was held in 1934. The news was published in the edition of *Sakal* dated 2 July 1934, that Mahatma Gandhi was himself present at this session. The report stated:

> It is proper that this Party [Congress Socialist Party] has been established as a subsidiary of the Congress. However, a programme of this Party has not been formulated properly. Many reforms needed to be made in the programme. Today, there are class conflicts and struggles of egotism rampant everywhere. It must be remembered that if atrocities on the underprivileged also enter into the fray, then any struggle would be contradictory to the objectives of the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi declared that he was ready to give his consent, with great pleasure, for establishment of the Socialist Party, if it took a vow of non-violence.

There is a possibility that Mahatma Gandhi conveyed a message through Barrister Purushottamdas Trikamdas to the Socialist Party to wait for some time, and also conveyed that there was a possibility of him joining their party.

It is said that police *bandobast* was provided in spite of the resistance of Mahatma Gandhi. However, what was this *bandobast*? In September 1947 there was an Inspector and four Head Constables on the *bandobast*. It was increased after the blast of 20 January 1948 to an Assistant Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors and sixteen Constables, totalling twenty-six only. One of the officers, A.N. Bhatia, did not turn up for the *bandobast* on 30 January 1948. He had neither taken leave, nor did he attend the *bandobast*. Sub-Inspector Amarnath attended the place of the *bandobast* late. The gardener of Birla House, Raghunath Naik, deposed that he caught the person who fired bullets at Gandhiji. Thereafter, two Constables came forward to help him. There were one Inspector and a Sub-Inspector, but they did not catch hold of Nathuram

Godse. There were five persons for the *bandobast* prior to the blast of 20 January. It was increased to twenty-six persons. Of them, an officer did not turn up for *bandobast* on 30 January and another gentleman arrived after the murder of Gandhiji! Such was the *bandobast*! The accused persons in the case of the murder had visited the place of the prayer meeting in the evening of 18 January. On 19 January all of them, including Madan Lal, visited the place of the prayer meeting once again, inspected the place and also gathered information about the police *bandobast*. On the fateful day also, all of them visited the place of the prayer meeting in the morning at 10 o'clock. These people visited the place thrice by forming groups of four persons each. The policemen on the *bandobast* did not even have a doubt as to why they were visiting that place so frequently.

Godse was ill on 20 January and hence he stayed back in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan. However, four others visited the place of the prayer meeting again at 10.30 in the morning. A blast took place on 20 January. Madan Lal was arrested. A hand-grenade was found on him. On the same day, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte arrived in Bombay via Kanpur–Allahabad. The Hindutva forces had been throwing bombs against Gandhiji since 1934. Mr Morarji Desai himself had ordered the arrest of Madan Lal and Karkare for committing many bomb blasts in Pune and in Nagar also. However, the police did not arrest them. The murderers were conducting recees of Birla House frequently since 20 January. They practised targeted firing behind the office of the Hindu Mahasabha and even then the Delhi police could not find the conspirators.

Against this background, one can realize why Pyarelal had expressed his opinion that RSS and anti-Gandhi elements had 'infiltrated' the Delhi police. While publishing the news of the blast of 20 January, *The Statesman* said that there was a conspiracy for murdering Gandhiji. *The Bombay Chronicle* also published similar news. Madan Lal had disclosed the name of Karkare and had also given information to the police about where Karkare was staying and others who were with him. Madan Lal was placed in custody for fifteen days on 21 January. On that day, he disclosed the name of the owner of *Hindu Rashtra*, a newspaper of Pune: Nathuram Godse. On 23 January, the hotel boy of Marina Hotel gave clothes bearing the dhobi mark 'N.V.J.' to the police. In spite of the fact that such strong evidence was in the hands of the police prior to 30 January, they could not find the owner of the *Hindu Rashtra* of Pune or his whereabouts. Such was the performance of the police and the capable Home Department! The Delhi police did not inform the Bombay police of the matter of clothes bearing the dhobi mark. The said persons also practised targeted firing behind a portion of the Birla Mandir on 29 and 30 January.

After the funeral rites of Mahatma Gandhi, it was decided to ban the RSS and also to issue secret orders to all Provincial governments. It was

decided to implement the ban by maintaining secrecy. However, the decision of the Cabinet became known to the people of the RSS within a few hours and they went underground. The Secretary of the Central Home Department, R.N. Banerjee has said that nobody knew of the statement made by Madan Lal after the blast of 20 January.[33] However, the decision to ban the RSS was taken in the Cabinet meeting in the evening. It was decided to convey this decision to all state governments late at night. The question remains as to how this decision reached the RSS within a few hours, between that evening and late night? Who might have leaked the news?

The secret decision reached the RSS instantly, but the confession of Madan Lal was concealed even from the Home Secretary. Madan Lal gave a statement on 20 January 1948. But this information was kept secret even from the Cabinet. The secret decision of the Cabinet became known to the leaders of the RSS, but the statement of Madan Lal remained secret from the Cabinet! Was this good governance?

Jayaprakash Narayan addressed a public meeting in Patna on 15 February 1948. A report of the speech was published in *The Times of India* edition of 18 February 1948. Jayaprakash Narayan said in his speech that 'if some of the prominent Ministers had not nurtured the RSS and if they did not remain present in the rallies of RSS, Mahatma Gandhi would not have been eliminated so suddenly!'

Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay convened a joint press conference. It was reported in the *Bombay Chronicle* dated 4 February 1948. They demanded that communalist Ministers should not be kept in the Cabinet. After the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, leaders made attempts to ensure that the resolution giving the RSS the status of a youth wing of the Congress should not be passed in the Congress Working Committee. The prominent leader of the then Maharashtra Congress and its General Secretary, Mr Yashwantrao Chavan, made a significant contribution in this regard.

It was very easy to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever may be the reasons, it is a fact that no honest efforts were made to save his life. The Hindutva forces were against Gandhiji from the very beginning of his political career. Poisonous propaganda was spread with malafide intentions of creating hatred in the mind of the common man about Mahatma Gandhi. Even bombs were used against him. After the bomb blast of 20 January, Madan Lal had revealed the names of the persons behind the murder conspiracy. The Iron Man of India, Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, had information about the conspiracy even prior to 20 January. In spite of all this, the fateful evening of 30 January 1948 was not averted.

The police could not find out the truth. Can it be said that this failure was only the result of complacency and negligence on the part of the police?

Assuming that the police were careless, can it be said that leaders in the government were not careless? Should the leaders in government not have pulled up the police and got the work done? In contrast, such skill and speed were displayed during the Hyderabad Police Action! Such firmness was displayed while annexing the princely states! Then why was the efficiency reduced at the time of Gandhiji's murder?

The 'promptness' displayed by the police in the matter of arresting the conspirators after the bomb blast was embarrassing for police forces the world over! Madan Lal's statement was given to the DIG-CID, Mr U.H. Rana, on 25 January. The case was handed over to him for the purpose of looking for the conspirators. In fact, Mr Rana ought to have rushed to Bombay and started the investigations speedily. However, he arrived at Bombay via Allahabad, travelling by rail because he could not travel by aeroplane! If he could not travel by air, it was necessary for some other officer who could travel by air to be sent to Bombay along with the statement of Madan Lal, or the responsibility of the investigation should have been entrusted to some other officer in Bombay. The railway reservation of Mr Rana was done from Triveni. Much time was lost by travelling via Allahabad. He would have reached Bombay earlier by this route, i.e. from Triveni.

Meanwhile, some other officers from Delhi had gone to Bombay on 24 January, but they returned to Delhi the next day. The Delhi police reached Bombay on 24 January and returned on 25 January; a ridiculous excuse was given that the Bombay police did not welcome them properly! These 'sons-in-law' of the Home Department returned due to annoyance that they were not treated properly!

The DIG-CID arrived at Bombay on 27 January from Delhi, travelling via Allahabad. A discussion started between the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr J.D. Nagarwala, Mr Rana and Mr Sanjivi, the senior officer of the Delhi Intelligence Department, during which Mr Rana handed over the statement of Madan Lal to Mr Nagarwala. When he was on just the second page of the statement, it was taken away from him. Mr Rana told Nagarwala that the statement was very lengthy and would take a long time to read, and so he would send it from Pune. However, the said copy of the statement was never sent (not till today)!

Agrani was the newspaper of Nathuram Godse. Madan Lal had given this information in his confession of 20 January. All these particulars are recorded in the Report of the Justice Kapur Commission. Mr Anant Shayyanam Iyyangar had asked a question to Home Minister Vallabbhai Patel on 6 February 1948, in the Constituent Assembly, about the measures undertaken during the time between the bomb blast and the murder of Gandhiji for saving his life. Mr Patel replayed the record about Gandhiji's refusal for any protection. There arose several sub-questions on this. The answers were annoying. Today,

anyone will laugh over these answers! They were: 'adequate measures were undertaken; the copy of the confession of Madan Lal was sent to Bombay; if Nathuram Godse was arrested on the basis of the statement of Madan Lal or if he was arrested in haste, then the other persons in the conspiracy would have gone underground.' Because of these reasons the Delhi police took a decision, in consultation with the Bombay police, not to arrest anybody.

> **Sub-question:** Was any effort made to obtain the photographs of the accused persons so as to facilitate their arrest?
> **Answer:** All of the accused persons were not at the same place. Hence, their photographs could not be obtained.

It was not a matter of publishing marriage photographs of the suspected persons! Then, where was the question of taking their group photograph? It was known from the statement of Madan Lal that the main controller of the conspiracy of Gandhiji's murder was Nathuram Godse. Why was he not arrested? The reason given was that his accomplices would run away! It was the need of the hour to collect as much information as possible by arresting whoever was available. Two senior officers from the Delhi police proceeded to Bombay on 21 January by air to meet the Deputy Police Commissioner of Bombay, Mr Nagarwala. However, the said police officers left behind in Delhi the diary containing the detailed information about the bomb blast and the statement, and proceeded to look for the conspirators without any papers or documents.[34] The Delhi police committed such a blunder while recording the descriptions of the conspirators that it was difficult for anybody to search for the conspirators. Such contradictory descriptions were recorded by them. The police force would not have remained so negligent if there were no feelings of annoyance, hatred and indifference about Gandhiji in the minds of people at the highest levels of administration. Even small children playing a game of 'police-police' would have behaved with more intelligence!

The Justice Kapur Commission has agreed that Prof. J.C. Jain had given prior information about the murder of Mahatma Gandhi to Morarji Desai. But Mr Manohar Malgaonkar has expressed doubt in his book about the fact that Jain had given prior information. Hence a question arises whether the doubt expressed by Malgaonkar might be under the influence of some political ideology. The Commission has refuted the argument of the Home Minister of Bombay Province, Morarji Desai, that he did not feel there was a danger to the life of Mahatma Gandhi from Pune. This is ridiculous because there were news reports from Pune about the murder of Mahatma Gandhi and some other leaders of the Congress. It is recorded in the Commission's Report that the Bombay government cannot avoid its responsibility and say that it was not felt necessary to take proper precautions in Pune.

After the last rites of Mahatma Gandhi, a meeting of senior officers

from the Home Department was convened at the residence of Sardar Patel on 31 January 1948. In the said meeting, it was told for the first time that Delhi police possessed a complete statement made by Madan Lal Pahwa in the morning of 21 January, i.e. the day after the bomb blast.[35] The statement of Madan Lal contained the entire scheme of the conspiracy to murder Gandhiji. It would have been very easy to arrest Godse and Apte on 23 January itself, on the basis of the said statement. However, nobody acted in that direction. The Delhi police did not give any information of this statement to the Home Department. The information was relayed for the first time in the meeting of 31 January held at the residence of Mr Patel, when the said statement was shown. Had the information contained in the statement been used, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte would have been arrested in Delhi the same day. The Home Secretary, Mr Banerjee, deposed in his testimony before the Justice Kapur that Godse and Apte were in Delhi in the morning of 21 January. When the Commission asked a senior police officer of Delhi, Mr Sanjivi, as to why he did not take immediate action, he simply replied, 'Sorry'. When one sees all this, the question arises whether this was the police force of the capital of the country or a collection of 'good-for-nothing' people. Also, how did the Iron Man not have any influence over the police? It was after seeing this that Mr Achyutrao Patwardhan demanded that Sardar Patel be removed from the Cabinet. There were conflicts between Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru in the Cabinet meetings while Gandhiji was alive. Maniben Patel, Patel's daughter, has noted in her diary that Mr Patel had informed Gandhiji about these differences of opinion. It also appears from the diary of Maniben Patel that Sardar Patel repented the murder of Gandhiji, or he may have felt guilty. It is mentioned in the diary that Patel used to say, 'I allowed Gandhiji to go alone. I should have gone along with him.'

Madan Lal was arrested after the bomb blast. His statement was obtained by the Delhi police, and they came to know that while he was from Mumbai, his bosses were from Pune. The Mumbai and Pune police could have identified the conspirators on the basis of this information and their assistance could have been obtained. However, the Delhi police avoided taking such help. The Delhi police should have called the Maharashtra police and told them to conduct surveillance at the residence of Gandhiji. However, the Home Secretary, Mr Banerjee, has deposed that the Delhi police did not arrange such surveillance. And then the news of Madan Lal's arrest arrived. The Bombay police ought to have taken due note that the Madan Lal Pahwa wanted by them was the same Madan Lal, but the Bombay police did not send anybody to Delhi. It is the practice many times that the police force of one state takes help from the police forces of other states for tracking criminals of their state.

After the murder of Gandhiji and till his last rites on 31 January, the Central Home Secretary, Mr Banerjee, was not shown the confession of

Madan Lal dated 20–21 January, in which he had stated that there was a conspiracy to murder Gandhiji. Patel had not informed Banerjee about giving information to Mr Morarji Desai about the conspiracy on 22 January or that he himself had such information. It was necessary for Mr Patel to ask what measures were undertaken for looking for the conspirators after the arrest of Madan Lal Pahwa, or after this information was received earlier by Mr Patel. Mr Patel should have taken action through the Home Secretary or senior police officers. However, Patel had not asked for this. If he had inquired with the Home Secretary, Mr Banerjee, or the senior police officers of Delhi, they would have provided such witnesses. However, none of them said that Mr Patel had inquired about the measures undertaken. The Home Secretary, Mr Banerjee said:

> There were no efforts, whatsoever, for searching the conspirators on the basis of the information obtained from the confession of Madan Lal, which was given in the night of 20 January till the morning of 21 January. If the attempts were made, then it was very easy to arrest Godse and Apte.

In this regard, the Justice Kapur Commission has criticized the affairs of the Home Department. Madan Lal Pahwa told me that during 1988–89, the conspirators had planned the murder of Nehru also, and it might have been true. Mr G.K. Handu, who was managing the security of Prime Minister Nehru, has mentioned this in his testimony. Godse too had told Handu that after Gandhi's murder, their target was Nehru. After this testimony, the Justice Kapur Commission has said in conclusion that,

> After seeing all this, it is clear that the said group believed in the ideology of murdering political leaders for achieving communal goals. The group associated with Godse and its activities were very dangerous. It was necessary that the Bombay police ought to have called the police from Maharashtra for investigation, who could identify the persons of this group on the basis of the statement of Madan Lal. If Bombay–Pune police had gone to Delhi or if Delhi police had sought their help, then their contingents could have been deployed at Railway Stations, Hotels, Religious Hostels and Political Party Offices, Birla House entrance and the places of prayer meetings, and the murder of Mahatma Gandhi could have been avoided.[36]

It is true that Mahatma Gandhi would not have allowed police at the prayer meeting. But it was easily possible to keep the police in civilian dress, in the guise of gardeners, caretakers or servants of Birla House. Mahatma Gandhi objected to the checking of people who came for the meeting. However, as observed by the Commission, it was not utterly impossible to keep surveillance without informing Gandhiji and to find out the group that had come from Maharashtra. Besides Gandhiji, there was a conspiracy to murder

Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, and this was revealed after Gandhi's murder. It was claimed that the partition was caused by Gandhiji and he had asked to give Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, for which he was murdered. But why did the conspirators want to kill the other leaders? These three leaders did not insist on giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the first person to give consent to the partition. Thereafter, Nehru gave his approval. If the partition had not been approved, a civil war would have broken out in the country. During such a civil war, the British army would not have remained impartial. Nehru felt that if the army behaved partially, there would have been more horrible conditions than partition of the country. It is claimed that for this reason, Nehru gave approval to the partition.

On account of the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, another incident in Gwalior and a conspiracy to kidnap Gandhiji were neglected. An article was published in the newspaper of the Hindu Mahasabha at Gwalior two months before Gandhi's murder, saying that Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru should be murdered. It was mentioned in that article that the Gwalior government had given a cheque of Rs 65,000 for purchasing pistols, etc., for the murder. A political activist named Gopikrushna Katre had given an affidavit before the Justice Kapur Commission and deposed that the amount of Rs 65,000 was given for the purpose of purchasing weapons to murder Gandhiji. However, Katre also said that the real conspirators behind the murder of Gandhiji were not all punished. Katre himself was a freedom fighter. He claimed that he handed a cheque of Rs 65,000 to a person named Parchure. Katre gave this information to Mr Leeladhar Joshi when he became the Prime Minister of Gwalior. Mr Joshi said that he would discuss the matter with Sardar Patel before taking any action. Meanwhile, Gwalior state agreed to its annexation. Hence, no action was taken in the matter of the incident at Gwalior. The Justice Kapur Commission has not held that the testimony of Katre was false. The Commission has said:

> The directive principles laid down for the Commission included whether somebody was aware of the plan of Gandhiji's murder before the actual murder and whether such a person had informed the Government. And hence, the evidence of Katre is out of the purview of the Commission. The Commission is not concerned to decide whether the King of Gwalior was involved in the murder of Gandhiji. The work assigned to the Commission was to investigate whether there was information available about the murder of Gandhiji before the actual murder.

The Commission could have said that the information from the witness Mr Katre was totally false.The truth about the Hindu Mahasabha giving Rs 65,000 would have been revealed if the matter was investigated separately. However, the incidents at Gwalior remained under the carpet. Dr Parchure's

name figures in the testimony of Katre. He was also punished in the case of Gandhiji's murder, but was acquitted on appeal.

Prof. Jain had given information about the conspiracy to murder Gandhiji to Morarji Desai. The actual murder took place after nine days of this. In the meantime, information was received about the conspiracy to kidnap Gandhiji. But its importance got reduced because of the murder. Hence, nobody thinks about it today. However, research scholars investigating into the modus operandi of Hindu fanatic groups which believe in violent activities should know of the conspiracy to kidnap Gandhiji. Morarji Desai informed J.D. Nagarwala about the conspiracy and told him to investigate it. Nagarwala was then the Deputy Police Commissioner of Bombay. The Home Minister entrusted the work of investigating into the conspiracy to a Deputy Commissioner without informing the Commissioner. What was the reason for this? Why did the Police Commissioner of Bombay not figure out the information obtained from Prof. Jain? Nagarwala was a Parsi and was not a sympathizer of the Hindutva forces. There was no question of Mr Nagarwala having any sympathy towards a Hindutva fanatic. Therefore, Morarji Desai believed that Nagarwala was the proper person to investigate the matter. Moreover, Nagarwala was in the good books of Morarji Desai. It was for all these reasons that Morarji Desai entrusted the work of investigation to Nagarwala instead of the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Nagarwala deposed before the Justice Kapur Commission that while he was investigating into the matter of conspiracy, he had received information from his sources about the conspiracy to kidnap Gandhiji. Hence, he went deep into the conspiracy of kidnapping Gandhiji. Assuming that Gandhiji was actually kidnapped before his murder took place, Nagarwala could have argued that the Home Minister had given him information about the murder and hence it was his duty to investigate in that direction. He could have claimed that he was investigating as per the directions of the Minister. If Nagarwala had claimed thus, the charge of not investigating the matter of kidnapping would not have been made against him. However, something different happened. The Home Minister had informed Nagarwala about the plan to murder Gandhiji and Nagarwala got information about the kidnapping plan. Hence, Nagarwala gave more importance to the investigation of the kidnapping. It proves that the information received by Nagarwala about the conspiracy to kidnap Gandhiji must have been most reliable. There was a plan to drive Muslims forcibly out of India. Nagarwala claimed that the conspiracy of kidnapping was a part of that plan.

Justice Kapur asked Nagarwala why he was after the 'theory' of kidnapping Gandhiji. He replied,

> It was not my theory or my concept but it was my information. Hence,

> I was after the investigations into the kidnapping conspiracy rather than concentrating on the murder conspiracy. I had received from my very reliable sources the information about the conspiracy of kidnapping Gandhiji. The information about the conspiracy of kidnapping Gandhiji was correct and the Director of Intelligence Bureau, Police Commissioner of Mumbai, DIG-CID of Pune Region and the Home Minister were also certain about the correctness of this information.

However, Morarji Desai claimed that Nagarwala had not informed him about this. Mr U.H. Rana was then the DIG-CID of Pune. Mr Rana and Mr Nagarwala, both had communicated with Mr Sanjivi, the senior officer of Delhi police, on 30 January 1948 in the morning at 7 o'clock, by a trunk call. It was a practice of Nagarwala to inform in writing about talks he had on the telephone. Accordingly, Mr Nagarwala informed Mr Sanjivi in writing reiterating the coversation he had had on the phone. According to Morarji Desai, Nagarwala failed in investigating the conspiracy of murder. However, it resulted in receiving information about the conspiracy of kidnapping. Hence, it cannot be said that the information was not reliable.

Nagarwala repeatedly stated that it was his duty to investigate into the information about the conspiracy of kidnapping. He also repeatedly said that he believed in the reliability of the information. The advocate of the Maharashtra government, R.B. Kotwal, also supported this information. It was an objective of the Hindutva forces to restrain the 'anti-Hindu' attitude of Mahatma Gandhi. In such circumstances, it was not proper to neglect the information about the conspiracy of kidnapping Gandhiji. Voices were being raised against giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. It was planned to restrain the Indian government from paying Rs 55 crores to Pakistan by keeping Gandhiji as a hostage. Kidnapping was less cruel than murder. Hence, it was but natural that people believed the information about the conspiracy of kidnapping. Madan Lal committed a bomb blast on 20 January. His objective was the same. Mr Kotwal deposed before the Justice Kapur Commission that the game plan was to create chaos at the prayer meeting and to take that opportunity to kidnap Gandhiji. The senior police officer from Delhi, Mr Sanjivi, also deposed that Mr Rana had given him the information in the evening of 27 January about the conspiracy of kidnapping. Mr Sanjivi said, 'This is a big organization. They have formed groups of twenty-twenty persons. They have a huge collection of weapons, bombs and other lethal weapons and this was told to me by Mr Rana.' After the murder of Gandhiji, the matter of conspiracy of kidnapping was relegated to the background. The Commission also did not ask questions to Nagarwala as to who gave this information and whether it was authentic. The Commission might not have felt the need to take cognizance of the conspiracy of kidnapping because of the murder of Gandhiji, or

Justice Kapur might not have given importance to it since it was not within the scope of his inquiry. Rana had informed Mr Sanjivi that the conspirators had formed groups of twenty each, and they had lots of arms and ammunition. Such detailed information was given and in spite of this, the police could not arrest a single person from the said group!

Nobody is immortal in this world. Mahatma Gandhi became a martyr on 30 January 1948. But his death could have been averted very easily on that day. Information about the murder of the Father of the Nation was available at least fifteen days in advance. Details about who was to commit the murder and the names of some of the conspirators were also available. The police had in their hands the statement of Madan Lal given on 20 and 21 January. Pahwa had said that Godse and Karkare were involved. The police had the address of the conspirators in Pune; they also had the name of the owner of *Hindu Rashtra*. The Home Minister of the country as well as the Home Minister of Bombay Province were aware of the murder plan prior to the murder. Despite that, the life of Gandhiji was not saved. The then rulers, especially the Home Department, must bear the blame of the sin of murdering Mahatma Gandhi. Nathuram Godse murdered Gandhiji by aiming the pistol right at his chest. The murderers were given a red-carpet welcome for aiming the pistol at Gandhiji because of the negligence of the Home Minister. One cannot fathom how the rulers slept at night without investigating and searching for the conspirators, even though they had information about the murder plan fifteen days in advance!

Partition: Conflict and Agitation

In the preceding chapters, we have discussed how and to what extent Mahatma Gandhi opposed the partition, and how he had suggested different alternatives in order to avoid partition. On that basis, it can be easily realized how utterly false is the claim of the Hindutva forces that Gandhiji was killed on account of the partition. Even though they realized that partition was inevitable, Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Congress were not mentally prepared to accept it and were not willing to take a firm stand against it. An erudite editor from Maharashtra has raised the question why Mahatma Gandhi did not stand firmly against the partition. Except Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress had accepted the inevitability of the partition. The Congress was in a dilemma because of the budget prepared by Finance Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in the Ad-Hoc Government. Because of this bitter experience, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had informed Lord Mountbatten, indirectly, that he was agreeable to the partition. Thereafter, Nehru also gave consent to it. They agreed to the partition realizing that it was inevitable, and Gandhiji agreed because he did not have any alternative in view of his opinion that the Congress must keep its word without bothering about his position on it.

What does it mean to take a firm stand against the partition? It was meaningless to say verbally that they were against it. The real meaning of taking a firm stand against the partition was to tell the people of the country to be prepared once again for sacrificing their lives. Mahatma Gandhi had given leadership to the Congress organization for twenty-eight years and he was the person who roped the Congress masses into the freedom struggle. It did not happen overnight. Gandhiji not only gave leadership but also made leaders of activists in various fields. He fought various battles and also prepared the captains to lead various other battles. He organized the military of the freedom struggle. Thereafter, he intensified the battles by using the unique weapon of *satyagraha* and non-violence. The efforts of twenty-eight years were behind all this. The same colleagues of Mahatma Gandhi were meeting Lord Mountbatten in his absence and consenting to the partition. Therefore, Gandhiji found himself alone. If an agitation were to be organized against the partition, the whole Congress organization should have been with him.

After the Congress agreed to the partition it would have been necessary to establish another organization for the agitation against the partition, or it would have been necessary for Gandhiji to split the Congress and to fight against colleagues who were with him for thirty years. Who were the other leaders with Gandhiji opposing the partition? The Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Azad, Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia and some others. Except Jayaprakash and Lohia, the other leaders had already crossed a ripe age. The masses of the country were delighted at the prospect of freedom, and hence, they were in the mood of accepting partition. There were massacres taking place in some parts of the country, yet the masses were in a frenzy and enjoying the freedom. In such circumstances, they would not have participated in the agitation, even if it was undertaken by someone like Mahatma Gandhi. Those who were speaking the language of United India, they too were not willing to stand behind Gandhiji. And the Hindutva forces did not have the courage of organizing their own separate agitation; they were helpless without the support of the masses.

However, if Gandhiji were alive, he would have tried his best to take the people along with him. He had taken a stand of giving Rs 55 crores to Pakistan as agreed. It was a moral stand. If the money had been given to Pakistan without any hassles, it is possible that Gandhiji would have gone to Pakistan after his hunger strike, although he had given no such hint. It was also possible that if Gandhiji's stand of giving money to Pakistan without any hassle and with diplomacy was accepted, the sympathies of the masses of Pakistan would have been won. Gandhiji knew that no support for an ideology could be obtained without the sympathies of the masses. What would have been achieved by Gandhiji by going to Pakistan? Would he have been successful after the creation of Pakistan when such success was not achieved

during thirty years of united existence? It is possible to raise a series of such questions. However, it can be said with certainty that Gandhiji would not have sat quiet. He would have made relentless efforts. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had raised a question: if Mahatma Gandhi had actively opposed the partition, what would have been the consequences? He himself tried to answer this question:

> Whether Jawaharlal Nehru and Barrister Jinnah would have ruled over India and Pakistan respectively by killing Mahatma Gandhi or by imprisoning him? Gandhiji could not create unrest against the partition even through his daily prayer sessions before the partition. Gandhiji did speak against the partition in his prayer sessions but he did not create unrest. I am ready to accept the fact that there was some incapability amongst the young leaders of the Congress Party.

Dr Lohia has also said that Gandhiji tried to assess them in his typical ways but he found that they were not capable.

The answer to the question why Gandhiji did not organize an agitation against the partition is this. He may have evaluated the young leaders and found that they would not have participated in the agitation. A united India would never have remained united simply by chanting *Akhand Bharat*. What efforts were made by the Hindutva forces for that? Did they propose, even as a strategy, to Mahatma Gandhi that he should undertake an agitation against the partition and that they would all stand behind him? If Gandhiji had refused to take their support after they proposed thus, then it would have been meaningful to allege that the partition was caused by Gandhiji. Nobody put forth even a thought of supporting Gandhiji in his struggle for a united India. A united India would not have come into existence simply by observing Independence Day as a day of mourning. Hence, Dr Lohia said,

> The Jansangh which cried in high pitch about United India and the earlier Hindutva forces which proclaimed the corrupt idea of 'Hindu Rashtra', in fact, assisted the British and the Muslim League in the matter of partition. Whatever might have been in their minds, these people did not make any efforts to ensure that the Muslims should remain in one country along with Hindus. On the contrary, they tried to ensure that the relations between Hindus and Muslims are strained. The real reason behind the partition was the strife between these two religious groups. Even if we assume that all those who created such strife were honest, the ideology professed by them of creating rift between Hindus and Muslims and their proclamation of United India was a disastrous self-deceit. By proclaiming United India and at the same time trying to increase the hatred and rift between Hindus and Muslims, they were, in fact, nourishing the ideology of separate Pakistan. The opponent of Muslims in Hindustan was, in fact, a friend of Pakistan. The

> Jansangh people and the Hindutva forces advocating United India are, in fact, the friends of Pakistan.

Dr Lohia was hopeful that Gandhiji would perform some miracle. Dr Lohia was of the opinion that the Hindus and Muslims in India would be closer culturally and mentally, and thereafter both countries, i.e. India and Pakistan, would be closer to each other, and then the real Hindustan of the dream of the masses would emerge.

The Hindutva forces were not ready to undertake an agitation under the leadership of Gandhiji for a united India. Then, Why did they not, then, organize an agitation on their own? It is necessary for any agitation to have support of the masses. And the masses should also accept the leadership of such movements. The masses were not behind the Hindutva forces. Hence, they could not even imagine undertaking an agitation. They also did not have the required militancy for such an agitation. Why were the masses not behind the Hindutva forces? It was because of the fact that the ideology of Hindutva was not the ideology preferred by the masses. This was the result of Gandhi's approach and efforts in politics. Hence, the Hindutva forces hated Gandhiji. The philosophy of the Hindutva forces was based on hatred, whether it was hatred against Muslims or hatred towards Gandhi! The society can never be united with hate politics, and if the society is not united, then independence and unity can't prevail! The Hindutva forces never understood this.

Mahatma Gandhi explained why he could not oppose the partition and why he did not think of undertaking an agitation against partition. He received innumerable letters after the resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee agreeing to the partition. He replied to some of the important letters and his replies are published in the second volume of *The Last Phase*, written by Pyarelal. He wrote:

> I do not think that anybody would have been more depressed than me because of the partition of India. However, I cannot promise an agitation. It is my opinion that this partition was improper. Hence, I do not wish to participate in the sin of the partition. However, the Congress has consented for the partition. Therefore, I am agreeing for the partition unwillingly. I cannot undertake an agitation against the Congress. Such an agitation cannot be possible under any circumstances. How can I undertake an agitation against the partition when the Congress has tied its hands on this issue?

A letter was received by Gandhiji from Dublin, Ireland. It said that the partition of India was not agreeable to Indians in Ireland. The British had put Ireland in a similar situation before leaving Ireland. In reply to this letter, Gandhiji said,

> I am lonely. I do not have any solution. I do not understand how the situation of Ireland is similar to India. However, the Congress and the Muslim

> League have consented for the partition. It is true that the Congress has given consent unwillingly. But if the Congress is a partner in the act of partition, then what is the use of my hunger strike? The Congress advocates industrialization and I am against it. However, it is not proper on my part to resort to hunger strike on this issue.

Gandhiji had once said that before the partition of India, he would divide his own body. Gandhiji was reminded of this by someone in a letter. In the prayer meeting of 19 June 1947, Gandhiji replied to this question saying that he said so because he was certain about the support of the masses. He further said that he had assumed that it was the opinion of the masses. He asked how he could go against the opinion of the masses, which accepted freedom with partition. Gandhiji was of the opinion that the partition would be avoided if Hindus and Muslims were united.

The group opposing partition was of the opinion that Hindu–Muslim unity meant appeasement of Muslims. This group declared Gandhiji as a sympathizer of Muslims only because he was insisting on Hindu–Muslim unity. Some of them went to the extent of naming Gandhiji as 'Maulana Gandhi'. Gandhiji was opposing partition, and this group was also against partition. Apart from this similarity, there was a vast difference in both their ideologies. A united India is never possible without the unity of Hindus and Muslims. Such a unity was advocated by Swami Vivekananda, Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi; if this had been accepted by the Hindutva forces, there would have been no partition at all! It is not enough to say that Gandhiji ought to have made efforts to avoid partition and, at the same time, to indulge in propagating hatred against Gandhiji and also assert that Gandhiji accepted partition.

A couple of Hindu Mahasabha activists once told Mahatma Gandhi that he was not a 'Mahatma'. They also said that he was weakening Hindus by propagating non-violence. At that time, Gandhiji said, 'When I was called "Mahatma", I instantly told everybody that I was not a "Mahatma" and this is not known to you. If you want to avenge the atrocities in Pakistan, you may do so by going to Pakistan.' Of course, Gandhiji tried to impress upon them the importance of the value of non-violence and also that atrocities should be prevented only by resorting to non-violence. After the said activists went away, Gandhiji said to Dr Rajendra Prasad that he would start a movement for involving the youth in constructive work by undertaking a countrywide campaign whenever he would be free from his work.

Mr N.R. Pathak has already said that the Hindu newspapers were spreading hatred against Mahatma Gandhi. It was also being propagated that Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest enemy. The partition was not a baby of Rajaji or Gandhiji. It was the consequence of a series of incidents that took place since 1909. It was also the consequence of the politics of spreading

an atmosphere of distrust amongst Hinduṣ and Muslims, and the hurt egos of political leaders. Lokmanya Tilak took the initiative and signed the Lucknow Pact, and reserved 33.5 per cent of seats for Muslims in the legislature. Lokmanya Tilak realized that the independence of India could not be achieved unless there was a unity amongst the two largest social groups, i.e. Hindus and Mulsims. *He even went to the extent of saying that the entire power of the country should be given into the hands of the Muslims* instead of providing more seats to Muslims in the legislatures. Mr Govind Talwalkar has said in his book, *Transfer of Power: 1947*, Volume II, that Gandhiji had once proposed that the Prime Ministership be given to Barrister Jinnah and this was in consonance with the opinion of Lokmanya Tilak. Mahatma Gandhi was an advocate of Hindu–Muslim unity and so was Lokmanya Tilak. However, the Hindutva forces blame only Gandhiji for appeasement of Muslims. They remain conveniently silent about similar ideas of Lokmanya Tilak.

As we have seen earlier, Mahatma Gandhi's politics was based on morality. Therefore, he insisted that Pakistan should be paid Rs 55 crores as agreed. He was of the opinion that we should behave with others on the basis of moral principles without bothering how the other party behaves with us. Mahatma Gandhi was seriously thinking of visiting Pakistan after his hunger strike in Delhi was over, so as to establish peace. The Hindus in Pakistan were being put through atrocities. Mahatma Gandhi was thinking that he must go there to give relief to the Hindu victims in Pakistan, to reassure them and to create confidence in their minds, and also to appeal to the conscience of Muslims in Pakistan for bringing about peace. He had said that he would definitely go to Pakistan, if he were allowed. If the Indian government had not paid the amount to Pakistan as agreed, Gandhiji's expedition to Pakistan would have been unfruitful. He was of the firm belief that if one did not follow morality, one did not have the right to expect others to be moral. It is possible that Gandhiji would have insisted on paying the amount to Pakistan so as to ensure that his principle was upheld. Moreover, he might have taken this stand so as to ensure that the prestige of India as an independent nation was enhanced by the fact that the country had honoured its first ever treaty with another nation. The Hindutva forces alleged, and they still allege, that Gandhiji was appeasing the Muslims. But what was the motive of Gandhiji in appeasing Muslims? He was not aspiring for power based on the support of the Muslims! He did not aspire for any post. There are very few examples in the world of people who could achieve power but refused to do so. And although the list is very small, it includes a majority of Indians. Mahatma Gandhi could have gained any position or post in independent India. But he never aspired for power. Another such example is Jayaprakash Narayan. Gandhiji never propagated politics of elections. It cannot be said that Gandhiji appeased Muslims for votes. He never contested any elections himself, so one

cannot even say that he wanted Muslim support to win elections or to become the Prime Minister of the country. So, the Hindutva forces should give reasons as to why they think that Gandhiji was appeasing Muslims.

Gandhiji might have neglected some of the mistakes of the Muslims; he might have given them favourable treatment. But all these efforts were aimed at strengthening the freedom struggle of the country and to ensure that it was the final battle. Gandhiji had correctly realized that the independence struggle would not have become countrywide if the masses belonging to all castes, creeds and religions did not participate. He had also realized that the country would lose its strength if we fought amongst each other. It is true that he too committed mistakes sometimes. But he had the courage to admit his mistakes. The masses do not respect persons who remain inactive themselves but find mistakes in others. The Hindutva forces had already experienced this. This is one of the reasons for their politics of hatred against Gandhiji. Mahatma Gandhi was of the opinion that secularism was necessary if this nation was to remain united. Lokmanya Tilak also believed this. The nationalism of Gandhiji was based on secularism and it was good for the nation. The Congress had emphasized secularism since its beginning. It was the base of the nationalism of the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi was of the firm belief that this is a country of all those who have taken birth here and have been nourished here, and who do not look towards another country. Gandhiji had said that this nation belongs to Muslims, Christian and Parsis as much as it belongs to Hindus. Independent India will not be a Hindu nation, but will be an Indian federal state. It will not belong to any caste, creed or religious majority. The Indian state will belong to representatives of Indian nationals. Secular citizenship, freedom to follow any religion, freedom to practise and promote any religion, freedom of expression, separation of religion and state are pillars of modern governance.

The resolution passed in the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 was based on secular principles. Gandhiji himself was religious. However, he agreed that the concept of God of every individual is different, and hence he argued that the organization called government should remain impartial as far as religion is concerned. Because of this ideology of Gandhiji, the view of a religious state advocated by the Hindutva forces was shaken to its roots. It was for this reason that Hindutva forces hated Gandhiji. While Gandhiji was religious and believed in God, he opposed the proposal for reconstruction of the Sorti Somnath temple using government money. This also demonstrates the moral politics of Gandhiji. Sardar Patel was staunchly opposing the payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan. The Finance Minister, Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, had put the Congress and Sardar Patel in a serious dilemma in the Ad-Hoc Government. Sardar Patel wanted to play the same game with Pakistan. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Acharya Kripalani were proclaiming in public meetings after the creation of Pakistan that 'Pakistan will not remain as a separate country'.

These three leaders felt that Pakistan would not be viable economically. If the amount was not given to Pakistan, there would be economic crisis in Pakistan and it would go bankrupt. It is quite possible that Sardar Patel took the stand of non-payment to Pakistan with the intention that it should go bankrupt!

Mahatma Gandhi insisted that social reforms should also be a part of political movements. Gandhiji himself undertook a social reform programme. He started a campaign for the eradication of untouchability. He rightly concluded that social reform programmes would strengthen the freedom movement, and it was most necessary for the creation of a strong nation that various social groups be united. If that did not happen, then the country would fall prey to foreign invasion. This was a lesson of history and Gandhiji took serious note of the same. Hence he emphasized the unity of all social groups. The Hindutva forces were aiming to create a *Hindu Rashtra* and to re-establish the old traditions, cultures, moral order, etc. Because of the social reform programme of Gandhiji, the concept of a religious nation as advocated by the Hindutva forces was shattered. The Hindutva forces did not have the strength to halt the downfall of their ideology. They did not even have a capable leadership to convince the masses of their ideology. It was a struggle of two ideologies. The Hindutva forces did not have the ability to counter modern views and they did not have capable leadership either, and hence they believed that if Gandhiji were killed, they would be able to take forward their ideology. They therefore murdered Gandhiji.

Mahatma Gandhi was a coordinator of ideologies. Morality, truth and non-violence were the bases of his politics. Therefore, he took a stand that Pakistan should be paid Rs 55 crores as agreed. However, he did not resort to a hunger strike demanding the said payment. He believed that the nation would never become strong without the unity of Hindus and Muslims. This does not mean that he was appeasing Muslims. His emphasis was that all deeds that are in the interest of the nation must be done. Acharya Shankarrao Javadekar has analysed this very effectively in his book on the two-nation theory titled *Unity of Hindus–Muslims*. He says,

> The wealthy class which is being created in this country, is the result of the patronage of the British Rulers and this class is growing but it does not have adequate strength to take power in its hands from the British Rulers. Moreover, the capitalist class which has emerged nowadays, nationwide, and has started struggling against the British for acquiring power, is being suppressed by the British Rulers by creating a phobia in the minds of the Muslim capitalist, which relies on the support of poverty-struck Muslim society, about the advanced capitalist class and with this intention the British Rulers encouraged the concept of separate Pakistan. Although the idea attracted the Muslim capitalists and traders, which depended on backward technology,

> the separate Pakistan does not have economic strength to achieve the welfare of the common Muslim masses.

Mahatma Gandhi gave importance to Hindu–Muslim unity because he believed that the freedom of the country would be deferred for a long time unless Hindus and Muslims maintained harmonious relations with each other. Acharya Javadekar further says,

> The national leaders of Hindustan have become aware that the conflicts which have begun now, would continue further even after the success of the freedom struggle, till such time that the British Empire is destroyed in all parts of the country. In spite of this, those leaders who have to run the national struggle against the British, must achieve Hindu–Muslim unity.

This is the essence why Gandhiji emphasized Hindu–Muslim unity. The Hindutva forces never thought about it. Even Lokmanya Tilak had thought about it.

The seeds of the two-nation theory were sown by Lord Dufferin. The Congress was established in 1885. It became an organization undertaking a movement from 1888. It had both Hindu and Muslim representatives. However, the representation was proportionate to their populations. Hence, Lord Dufferin tried to create a rift amongst the Hindus and Muslims by arguing that 'there are two nations in India, one Hindu and the other Muslim; Hindus are dominant in Congress and hence, it is a Hindu organization, Muslims should not participate in it.' Sir Syed Ahmad became a victim of this. He started speaking against the Congress. The 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British continued even after Lord Dufferin. It was not possible to oppose the said policy of the British by becoming a puppet in the hands of the British, objectively or indirectly. The policy of indulging in politics in the name of religion and of a religious nation was strengthening the hands of the British. Lord Dufferin had propagated the view that the Congress was an organization of Hindus with the intention of keeping British rule intact. The only answer to that was the unity of Hindus and Muslims.

The first ever riots between Hindus and Muslims took place in Bombay Province in 1893–94. Hindus and Muslims had fought shoulder to shoulder in the mutiny of 1857. Therefore, it became the need of the hour for the British rulers that strife between Hindus and Muslims should increase. At that time, the Congress movement was more powerful in Bombay Province. Riots started in Bengal after the partition of that province. The conspiracy of the partition of Bengal was hatched with the intention that East Bengal should become a Muslim province. Thereafter, Morley–Minto incorporated into the Constitution of India the principle of independent constituencies, which was more diabolic than the partition of the provinces. It is worth considering what Sultan Ahmad had said about it:

> With the reforms accepted by Morley–Minto in the 1909 Act, a serious practice has been started in the history of Indian Constitution. The British have made a convenient provision of communal representation by creating separate constituencies. This is a step against the basic principle of democracy. By creating the separate constituencies, the seeds of division have been sown.[37]

After the independent constituencies, a discussion began about the Montague–Chelmsford Reforms. At that time, Lokmanya Tilak signed the Lucknow Pact on the basis of the said principle of separate constituencies, with the objective of securing support of the Muslim League for the demand of the Congress and also so that Hindu–Muslim unity was achieved. According to the Lucknow Pact, it was agreed to allocate 50 per cent seats to Muslims in Punjab, 40 per cent seats in Bengal, 25 per cent seats in Bihar, 15 per cent seats each in the Central Provinces and Madras Province, and one-third seats in Bombay Province. It can be said that this was the beginning of the appeasement of Muslims! It can also be said that the root of such appeasement was the separate constituency system. While justifying the Lucknow Pact, Lokmanya Tilak had said,

> We have to fight against the foreign Government. If this fight is to achieve success, then we have to amicably settle the disputes amongst ourselves and we must demand in one voice by mitigating all our differences of caste, religion and opinion. While doing this, we should not mind if the Muslims got more rights and, in fact, we should not mind if the British Rulers handed over the entire country to any of the communities in Hindustan. We have signed this Pact with the sole intention that the foreign power must leave Hindustan and this country becomes free.

Mahatma Gandhi had also put forth the scheme before Jinnah, suggesting to him to constitute his Cabinet. Mr Govind Talwalkar has said in his *Transfer of Power* that Gandhiji prepared this scheme by taking inspiration from Lokmanya Tilak! Talwalkar's opinion is correct. Unity of Hindus and Muslims was possible only after the Lucknow Pact.

It was because of this that the group of nationalist Muslims grew. The Muslims had also sacrificed, like others, for Hindu struggle along with the Congress for independence after 1925 and during the Non-Cooperation Movement. The British rulers could transform the unrest of the masses into religious strife. Acharya Javadekar gives an important example:

> In the mutiny of the Moplas of Malabar Province, the Muslim Gundas perpetrated severe atrocities on Hindus. The nationalist Muslim leaders expressed strong protest against this. However, Hindu–Muslim riots took place at different places after the political movement receded. Behind the riots of Moplas, there is a reason of economic vested interests of the landlords and

> the agricultural tenants also. Most of the landlords in Malabar are Namboodiri Brahmins and the poor Moplas are in the debt-trap of these landlords. Such a condition is always ripe for emergence of class-struggle out of the economic class-conflicts. However, the gullible Hindi masses transform such economic class-conflicts into religious and caste conflicts. It is very easy to push the economic or political resurgence of the illiterate Hindi masses towards the direction of religious hatred, since the Hindi masses always give communal dimension to every class-conflict.

The analysis of Acharya Javadekar is relevant even today. Whenever Hindu–Muslim unity was achieved, the British invented a way of making Hindus and Muslims fight each other. They made use of Muslim religious leaders for this. Similarly, they made use of Hindu fanatics too. The British established the policy of 'Divide and Rule' by partitioning Bengal in 1905 and by creating separate constituencies in 1909. The seeds of division took firm root when Lokmanya Tilak signed the Lucknow Pact in 1916. Swatantryaveer Savarkar put forth the two-nation theory in 1937 and Jawaharlal Nehru issued a statement on 10 July 1946. The seeds culminated into the fruits of two nations because of the subsequent politics. The politics of Mahatma Gandhi had nothing to do with it. Lokmanya Tilak would have been branded as an appeaser of Muslims after the Lucknow Pact! The politics of hatred takes birth when politics does not have basis in an ideology and does not have an economic programme.

Some Muslim leaders had opposed the two-nation theory. However, the Hindutva forces do not have the honesty to admit this. Separate constituencies were created in 1909. At that time, Mahatma Gandhi was nowhere on the political arena of the country. Separate constituencies were created seven years prior to the Lunknow Pact of 1916 between Tilak and Jinnah. Tilak also did not oppose separate constituencies. However, in the subsequent politics, Mahatma Gandhi got the constituencies meant for Harijans cancelled by resorting to a hunger strike. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar agreed to the cancellation of constituencies meant for Harijans only for saving the life of Mahatma Gandhi. He had opposed the separate constituencies of 1909. Sir Sultan Ahmad had said at that time that the Act of 1909 pertaining to separate constituencies was a dangerous turn in the history of the Indian Constitution. It was in violation of the basic principles of democracy to create separate constituencies on the communal principle. The seeds of division were sown by the separate constituencies.

Mr A.M.A. Shustari opposed the two-nation theory. In his book *Outline of Islamic Culture*, he says,

> If all the people belonging to all the religions imbibe the art of formation of a nation of all the religious groups, then only the problems faced by the country will be solved. No problem can be solved by creating a hybrid of

> religion and nationality. We can create the true nationality of Hindustan only by getting rid of the religion-specific feelings of nationality and also by setting aside the concepts of Hindu Nation and Muslim Nation.

Rezaul Karim had said that

> the concept of creating Muslim Nation must be thrown away. The concept of making a nation on the basis of religion is now out-dated. Now, new problems have emerged and we must find out new ways to resolve them. The idea of creating a Muslim Nation is foolish. We have to take into consideration that there is a vast difference between the new concept of citizenship and the thousand-year-old concept of citizenship. We must construct a single nation by bringing about unity of the Muslims and the people other than Muslims. Both of them should establish the national Government. The impure alliance of religion and politics will become a big obstacle in the way of nationality.

There were no influential persons like Rezaul Karim or Sultan Ahmad in the politics of the time, and hence, the consequences of the Divide-and-Rule policy of the British were inevitable.

Sir Sultan Ahmad had consistently stated how the demand of Pakistan was not in the interests of the Muslims. While analysing the merits of the argument that the conflict between Hindus and Muslims should be resolved by setting up one or two independent states in areas where the Muslim population was dominant, Sir Sultan Ahmad gave detailed reasons for his conclusion that the said argument would be disastrous for the Muslims. In his book, *A Treaty between India and the United Kingdom*, he argued:

1. The Concept of Pakistan can be clearly understood as it is based on self-decision of the Muslims. However, nobody could have earmarked the four boundaries of Pakistan. The advocates of Pakistan will find it difficult to answer the following questions even if the four boundaries are decided anyhow:
   a. What would the advocates of Pakistan do if the Sikhs opt to join the Hindu United state? Which area would they give to the Sikhs?
   b. Whether Ambala and Jalandhar are to be given to Pakistan irrespective of what happens? What principle is to be used for this?
   c. Whether Amritsar will be in Pakistan? [Sultan Ahmad was of the opinion that Sikhs would never approve of it.]
   d. What would be the state language of North-East Pakistan?
   e. Whether a strip of land would be required for joining the states of North-East and North-West Pakistan? If there is a need for it then what is the arrangement for the same)

f. Whether Calcutta would be in Pakistan? [Sultan Ahmad was of the opinion that it could never be.]
g. What would be the consequences if Muslims of the border provinces decided not to join Pakistan?

After narrating these difficulties, Sir Ahmad said that Muslims who would remain in the provinces dominated by Hindus would not improve their condition because of the creation of Pakistan. In fact it would deteriorate because the Muslims would become a minority and foreigners in these provinces; hence the rights which they are entitled to, on account of the communal award, would be lost. One can imagine from the questions raised by Sir Ahmad that Mahatma Gandhi was saying that if Pakistan had to be created, it should happen after the British left. Mahatma Gandhi was asking Jinnah to short-change his demand of Pakistan only because of these hurdles. If the partition took place after the British left, then the form of Pakistan would have been entirely different. Jinnah was fully aware of this, and hence he refused Gandhiji's suggestion.

Gandhiji's ideology was capable of resolving the vital conflicts and also could eradicate the conditions due to which India was continuously under the rule of foreigners. However, the Hindutva forces allege that Mahatma Gandhi was as a traitor to the country, even when his ideology had the above-stated potential. Indian culture, which is a Hindu culture, revealed its weakness after the aggression of Islam. Buddhism vanished from India after the first invasion of Islam. It became clear after the invasion of Islam that the social institutions of Hindus were weak because of the influence of scriptures like the *Srutis*, *Smritis* and *Puranas*. The invader tribes consisted of just 700–800 persons. They were not massive. Yet the Indians could not defeat them. This was a consequence of the caste system. There was no social harmony because of the caste hierarchy. Naturally, the feeling of halting the invasion of foreigners by standing in unity against them never arose in the minds of Indians. Gandhiji had realized this weakness, and hence he was trying to reconstruct a society as a united country by eliminating the divisive factors. Gandhiji tried to intensify the freedom struggle even at the cost of giving more power to some social groups as envisaged by Lokmanya Tilak.

Gandhiji, like Tilak, was of the opinion that the battle against the British would not be ultimate if the divisions of society remained. It was for this reason that Lokmanya Tilak signed the Lucknow Pact and Gandhiji extended more sympathy towards Muslims. The Hindutva forces wanted to establish a state having a hegemony of Brahmins, and hence they were avoiding criticism of Lokmanya Tilak but were not willing to spare Gandhiji for 'appeasement' of Muslims! What is the secret behind this two-tongued attitude of the Hindutva forces who criticize Gandhiji but do not utter a single word of blame

against Lokmanya Tilak? If we assume that appeasement of Muslims led to the partition of India, then, before Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak should be termed responsible for it. The Hindutva forces have taken a different stand about 'the first' culprit for appeasing Muslims, but they murdered the other 'culprit' for the same offence. This proves beyond doubt that the Hindutva forces are dishonest. In order to escape this utter dishonesty, they say that they killed Gandhiji for the issue of Rs 55 crores.

The same question arises again: the issue of Rs 55 crores was there neither in 1934 nor in 1946, then why were the attempts to murder him made in Pune in both those years? Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards Muslims was not different from that of Lokmanya Tilak. Tilak said that the British should first leave India even by handing over power to Muslims, and Gandhiji said the same. Swami Vivekananda also emphasized the need for Hindu–Muslim unity when he spoke about the bright future of India. He said: 'The only hope for our motherland is the coordination and coexistence between the Hindu religion and Islam religion. The future India cannot afford to have the brain of Vedanta and a body of Islam.' Does this not amount to advocacy of Hindu–Muslim unity? But Vivekananda is never blamed for appeasement of Muslims. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, who died in the year 1901, also strongly advocated unity of Hindus and Muslims. Justice Ranade said,

> This vast country cannot make progress unless the Hindus and Muslims unite and this is the lesson which we must learn from the History. We must take up the path on which Emperor Akbar and his advisors walked and we must avoid the blunders committed by his grandson Aurangzeb.

However, nobody blames Justice Ranade as an appeaser of Muslims. Swami Vivekananda, Justice Ranade and Lokmanya Tilak strongly advocated the unity of Hindus and Muslims. However, the Hindutva forces do not blame them but only single out Mahatma Gandhi for this allegation. The only reason for this is that the power lost by the upper castes would not come back into their hands because of the ideology of Gandhiji. Therefore, the Hindutva forces blamed Gandhiji for appeasement of Muslims with malafide intentions of generating and spreading hatred against Gandhiji in the minds of Hindus.

'The Act of 1909 set a bad precedent in the history of Indian Constitution. The seeds of division are sown due to the separate constituencies based on castes.' The prediction made by Sir Sultan Ahmad, quoted above, have come true. The Hindutva forces indulged in politics of hatred against Muslims instead of spreading the views of Muslim leaders such as Sir Sultan Ahmad. The British divided Hindus and Muslims. The same task is done by the Hindutva forces by their activities. Some Muslim leaders had warned that divisive forces would be strong because of separate constituencies; in spite of this, Lokmanya Tilak executed the Lucknow Pact with Jinnah in 1916. The

basic reason for this was that there was no alternative to the unity of Hindus and Muslims. The Hindutva forces keep silent on Lokmanya Tilak's views on Muslims, but when Gandhiji stressed Hindu–Muslim unity, they accuse him of appeasement of Muslims and call him 'Maulana' Gandhi. How could this happen? On the other hand, Vivekanand was not a politician but a spiritual leader. He didn't have any influence over political change. Justice Ranade and Lokmanya Tilak were Brahmins. The movement Justice Ranade led was limited. He supported social reforms, but he himself was not ready to accept it. This could be the reason why his activities could never lead to changing the foundations of society. Lokamanya Tilak and Jannah entered into Lucknow Pact in 1916. If we see the comments of Lokmanya Tilak about farmers, tailors, traders, etc., in his speech at Athani in 1917, it is apparent that the overall ideology of Lokmanya Tilak emphasized Brahmin hegemony, and this was well-known to the Hindutva forces. Hence, they have not blamed Tilak for appeasement of Muslims. Mahatma Gandhi was the only leader who insisted on social reforms and putting forth the claims of the majority of the society, and the Indian masses stood firmly behind Gandhiji, and this was a pain in the neck for the Hindutva forces.

The Politics of Violence

It was inevitable that the murder of Gandhiji was committed by followers of Hindutva since their ideology advocates such violence. The Chitpavan Brahmins had been actively participating in this politics since the days of Lokmanya Tilak. Although Brahmin hegemony received a setback after the arrival of the British, some persons from this group secured important and honourable posts in the government. The group which did not get such positions was disgruntled. This group was a prominent supporter of Lokmanya Tilak. The group which followed Justice Ranade was of the opinion that political reforms should be brought about by constitutional means.

Lokmanya Tilak believed in generating unrest and grabbing rights from the hands of the enemy. Justice Ranade and Lokmanya Tilak were together for some time but they parted ways. The aggressive group of Brahmins remained with Lokmanya Tilak. This group either did not understand the politics of Lokmanya Tilak or it did not have the capacity to understand it. Hence, people of this group went on misinterpreting the politics of Tilak. Lokmanya Tilak had criticized Muslims after the communal riots of 1893. This group misinterpreted that this was the politics of Tilak. They did not understand the policy behind his signing the Lucknow Pact. This is the point from where the politics of Lokmanya Tilak and the Hindutva forces diverges. After the communal riots of 1893, the British prohibited processions and playing traditional music in front of masjids. Lokmanya Tilak opposed it saying that it was an attack on the basic freedom of the people. The Hindutva forces misused this for spread-

ing hatred against Muslims. They lacked political ideology; their thinking and actions were that of fanatics. And they pretended to be revolutionaries!

For any revolution, a paramount requirement is the economic programme based on ideology and a military of committed activists aiming to achieve power by violent means for implementing such a programme. The Hindutva forces did not have any of these except violence. Hence, they were not at all revolutionaries. They advocated personal violence. Violence against person(s) was a prominent part of their politics. The repercussions of such an ideology were not realized by the Indian masses until some of the Britishers were killed by followers of this kind of ideology.

Mrs Valentine Chirol stated in her book *Indian Unrest* (1910):

> There are innumerable aspects of revival of Hindutva – as many as the innumerable sects in Hindu religion. However, it is important to note that whenever the political movement takes a very poisonous form, they take support of this or that well-known Gods and Goddesses for creating nuisance.

The analysis of Mrs Chirol is valid and relevant even today as far as the Hindutva organizations are concerned. The work of the RSS is conducted secretly. The work of the Hindu Mahasabha was also not open and democratic. In a letter addressed to the chief of the RSS, M.S. Golwalkar, by Sardar Patel on 11 September 1948, it was stated that

> the atmosphere of the country has become explosive because of the venomous speeches of the RSS containing hatred and violation of civil manners. The murder of Mahatma Gandhi was the result of such an atmosphere created due to their speeches and the RSS displayed pleasure over the murder of Gandhi by distributing sweets. The people were annoyed over this. The people have never been with you.

Similarly, in a letter sent by Sardar Patel to Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee on 18 July 1948, he said that the existence of the government was in danger due to the activities of the RSS. In a statement issued by Sardar Patel on 4 February 1948, it was stated that an atmosphere of violence and individual murders has been created and it has resulted in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The said letters of the first Home Minister of independent India, Sardar Patel, and the analysis of Mrs Chirol about the Hindutva forces throw light on the orthodoxy of Hindutva forces. One can imagine in what context Patel must have made these statements, probably after verifying the information given by the officers deposing before the Justice Kapur Commission.

Mr J.N. Sahani had said that the bomb blast took place in the prayer meeting of Gandhiji on 20 January 1948, and that, during that time, a secret organization consisting of about six lakh activists was conspiring to overthrow the government. This organization had centres all over the country. It was

said that Mr Golwalkar, Mr Bhopatkar or Dr Khare were the leaders of the said organization. The activists of the said organization were being trained at Alwar and Bharatpur. The objective of this organization was to take power into its own hands by killing senior leaders. It is presumed that the murder of Gandhiji was a part of this conspiracy. When the British left the country, this organization was conducting secret activities aiming to take over power. Some of the Princely States were helping it by acting as a Fifth Column.[38] Sahani had not named the RSS as the said organization, but he did mention the names of prominent RSS leaders. There is a reference in the letter of Sardar Patel to their insurrection which might be related to this.

Dr Shyama Prasad Mukhejee, the then president of the Hindu Mahasabha, had advised the cadres in1943 that they should adopt democratic means and should get rid of communal politics and the politics of hatred. They should abandon politics, get rid of caste prejudices and work only as a social and cultural organization. However, it was not accepted by the Hindu Mahasabha. Then, Dr Mukherjee resigned from the Hindu Mahasabha. He realized the consequences of the politics of communal, sectarian and religious hatred after the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The thinking of the Hindutva forces and their organizations, the manner of their functioning and their emphasis on secrecy substantiate the analysis made by Mrs Chirol.

The leaders of the RSS, right from Dr Hedgewar, had propagated that Gandhiji was an appeaser of Muslims. The Hindutva forces demanded that Mahatma Gandhi should retire from politics. However, Gandhiji declared that he would not abandon his work till his last breath. Mr N.R. Pathak says,

> When Gandhiji refused to retire from politics, his opponents found themselves in a great dilemma. He is not leaving politics and is also hopeful that he would live long; many in Maharashtra thought that the only alternative was to kill him. The followers of Tilak in Maharashtra chose to remain aloof from the movement of Mahatma Gandhi or adopted an attitude of showing that they were with Gandhiji in times of prosperity, but away from him during hard times. However, some of the activists from this class were afflicted with a disease of 'Gandhi Phobia' which rendered them obsessive about the thought of eliminating Gandhi.[39]

Swami Shraddhanand organized a movement under the aegis of the Hindu Mahasabha for reconverting Hindus who had embraced Islam. According to N.R. Pathak, the principle of this movement was 'Purification and Organization'. This is a verbatim translation of '*Tanzim Tabligh*' of the Muslims, and hence, it will not be wrong to say that the Hindu Mahasabha is a reflection of the Muslim League. Mr N.R. Pathak has virtually carried out a postmortem of the politics of Hindu Mahasabha. He says that 'the Hindu Mahasabha, which seems to be virtually like a progeny of the Muslim League,

has in fact helped to strengthen the concept of Pakistan'. Pakistan was created not by Gandhiji but by the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha, which indulged in politics supplementary to each other. This is how Pakistan was created. The Hindutva forces hide this truth and blame Gandhiji for the partition.

The commentary of Mr Pathak on the politics of the Hindu Mahasabha is worth taking note of. He says,

> The politics of Hindu Mahasabha was very simple and easy. Their politics involved a Goebbels-like propaganda that the Congress was giving opportunity to the Muslims for taking the Hindus for a ride, and at the same time, causing damage to the Hindu society, and in order to substantiate it all, they hurled abuses at Gandhiji! The common morality of the Hindu Mahasabha was that of indulging in character assassination of Gandhiji and Congress, criticizing the Muslims in soft language comparatively and remaining indifferent towards the ultimate goal [Independence of the country].

The Hindutva forces were afflicted by the jaundice of hatred against Gandhiji.

Dr Lohia has said that the attitude of the Hindutva forces was also a cause of the partition. The Muslims started becoming sympathizers of the concept of Pakistan as the politics of hatred against Muslims intensified. At the same time, the politics of Hindutva forces was growing in strength. The Hindutva forces did not have anything to do with any constructive programme or economic and social reforms. Hence, the atmosphere of hatred was more useful for their survival. The structure of the politics of Hindu and Muslim communal forces was based on hatred of each other. If Pakistan was not created, the question of Rs 55 crores would not have arisen. On what basis then would the Hindutva forces have practised their politics? It is possible that the politics of the Muslim League would have become more aggressive and the Hindutva forces would not have been able to practise their politics in the event Pakistan was not created. However, it also meant that the Hindutva forces would not have anything in their hands except hatred of Muslims, as well as hatred of the Congress and its leader Gandhiji. Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had realized this. When he realized that hatred cannot be a perennial basis for politics, he expressed an opinion that the Hindu Mahasabha should abandon the politics of caste–religious strife and it should open its doors to people of all castes, creeds and religions. However, the Hindu Mahasabha did not agree to any of these and Dr Mukherjee resigned from the post of president of the Hindu Mahasabha. Mr N.C. Chatterjee became its president. Mr Chatterjee also tried to put forth an alternative of a broad-based politics, but he failed like Mukherjee. Thereafter, Dr Mukherjee founded the Jansangh and took a stand that Jansangh should be a broad-based political party.

Dr Mukherjee established the Jansangh with the help of the RSS. He died in jail in Kashmir. The deaths of the first three presidents of the Jansangh

are suspicious. Dr Raghuveer died in an accident. Mr Deendayal Upadhyay was murdered. All three had tried to give a broad base to the party. This is a strange coincidence! If the Hindutva forces did not heed the advice of Dr Mukherjee, how could they digest the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi? It is untrue that Dr Mukherjee had completely abandoned politics based on religion. He had established the Jansangh with the help of the RSS. However, the Hindutva forces did not even accept the advice of diluting their religious politics.

The politics of the Hindutva forces involved hatred of Gandhiji and, as said earlier, during the regime of the Peshwas, they had secured honourable posts, but their hold over the political and social arena was weakened. This class was hoping that they would regain their hold over the society because of the politics of Lokmanya Tilak. However, their hopes were completely shattered because of the 'all-inclusive' politics of Mahatma Gandhi. Those groups of Brahmins which realized that change was inevitable and that they must accept the change or otherwise they would not survive, loyally participated in the movement of Gandhiji. Many of them contributed immensely in the vital work of taking ahead the progressive movement. The Hindutva forces remained aloof from the mainstream. It is pertinent to ask what programme is in their hands for the resolution of various problems of their brethren, leave alone the problems of the common masses, in case the *Hindu Rashtra* of their dreams comes into existence? When such a programme does not exist, the organization is kept alive only by enhancing an atmosphere of hatred. It cannot be kept alive by adhering to truth. Hence, they do not bother about truth or falsehood. The only enemy of religious fanatics is 'truth', irrespective of the religion of such fanatics! If they adhere to the truth, they are rendered stark naked. It is for this reason that they insist on propagating falsehoods. Hence, the people of the RSS also resort to falsehood. The Bharatiya Janata Party does the same thing. The people of the Hindu Mahasabha also do this, and the Muslim religious organizations also indulge in false propaganda for securing the support of their community. The hue and cry of '*Islam khatare mein hain*' is a part of this. The Hindutva forces also cry foul that the Hindus will be a minority in this country! When the pace of economic development becomes slow, communal forces raise their heads.

It is easy to understand why and how Hitler rose in Germany and in what conditions. The economic condition of Germany had worsened after the First World War. The German people did not get able leadership required for improving their economy from the democratic process. There were two major political parties in Germany, i.e. the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Democrats. They could not salvage the economy. This was going on on the one hand, and on the other, both the Communist groups were virtually considering themselves as enemies of each other. One socialist group was trying to eliminate the other group. One democratic group was trying to suppress the other

group. The German people were confused about democracy. The Nazi party of Hitler rose against this background. In order to remove the confusion and depression from the minds of the German people, Hitler started propagating falsehoods in a loud voice. It was a great lie: 'Gentlemen, the German race is the greatest race of the world, it is complete with all noble qualities. It is our sacred goal to establish the kingdom of our race.' If the German race were so pure, then why did Germany land itself in such a mess? When this question was asked to Hitler, he said that the country was in such a mess because the German race was no longer pure. It had been diluted and become impure. During the war, Hitler repeatedly made contradictory statements in the same speech! He would say that prices would not be allowed to increase and, at the same time, declare that he would not allow prices to come down! He propagated, in furtherance of his ideology of a pure German race, that the Jews should be driven out of the country, killed and eliminated from the earth.

One should think for a moment why this history of Germany has crept in here. It is pertinent to mention it here in order to show that the circumstances of today's India are similar to those of Hitler's Germany. The economic condition of India has deteriorated. It is doubtful how much success will be achieved by the prevailing leadership in salvaging the economy. The problems of the people have been aggravated because of the complacency of the rulers. Hence, the people are confused about the efficacy of democracy. Some people are feeling that dictatorship is better than democracy. In one of the surveys conducted by an organization, it was found that 'fifty-eight per cent people from urban areas want dictatorship for development of the country. Seventy per cent of the people from Mumbai and Madras and forty per cent people from Delhi have expressed an opinion that their problems will be resolved by dictatorship instead of democracy' (*The Times of India*, 28 December 1993). Of the above sample, 7.4 per cent are teachers, 7 per cent are doctors, 6.2 per cent are journalists, 4.1 per cent belong to the police and 4.5 per cent are employees of Doordarshan. However, dictatorship cannot solve the problems of the people. It is an illusion that problems are solved and there is no corruption in a dictatorship.

There are more than two groups within the Congress and they too are fighting amongst themselves. The factions within the Janata Dal are called '*dal-dal*' (marshy land). One group is trying to finish the other. The left-wing Marxists and the right-wing Marxists are taking pride in overpowering each other. The Hindutva forces are assuring the people that they will take India to the zenith of prosperity once again. They are saying that their religion and culture is the best in the world. There should be a *Hindu Rashtra* to keep religion and culture at the top. They are also saying that the purity of the Aryan race must be maintained because it is the supreme race. It is their duty to maintain the pride of the Aryan race, but the Muslims are destroying our supreme culture

and hence they should be driven from the country or they should live as we say. They are creating issues like Mandir–Masjid for spreading hatred against Muslims. The Hindutva forces have not created the atmosphere of hatred for the furtherance of communalism just today. They have been doing it since the days of the freedom movement. Their hatred of Mahatma Gandhi is a result of that. In the freedom movement, progressive thought was dominant. Hence, the politics of hatred of the Hindutva forces did not get support. Now, the progressive movement has been splintered. Movements for economic issues are on the wane. The economic condition has deteriorated. Hence, the Hindutva forces appear to be gaining strength. But it is not real strength. It is a malignant growth, like an epiphyte.

The movement of Gandhiji was like a huge boulder in the path of the Hindutva forces. Therefore, they were ferocious towards Gandhiji and hated him with all their might. The leaders who founded the Hindu Mahasabha had left it in the year 1927 itself. Their only capital was hatred against Gandhiji. Mr Pathak has said that Gandhiji was murdered as a result of this:

> The particular group of intellectual Brahmin-class from Maharashtra started separating itself from the national mainstream when the Direct Resistance Movement was started under the leadership of Gandhiji since 1918. It started realizing that it was utterly impossible for them to retain the control of this movement into their hands if the politics became 'mass-based' and 'all-inclusive'. They established their own camp by realization that their social and economic prestige would melt down in the furnace lit by Gandhiji.[40]

They felt that they must eliminate the great man, who was charismatic enough to bring together all sections of the masses, irrespective of their left or right leanings, especially when they had prospects of winning power through the elections. After the murder of Gandhiji, Mr N.G. Gore had said,

> It was the final assault of the Hindutva forces for the purpose of securing the leadership of the Counter-Revolution in Hindustan so as to enthrone themselves on the seat of social, economic and political power, since these middle-class Brahmins were anti-masses by their very character and their traditional attitude, which demonstrated their extreme ego, lust for power, orthodoxy and caste-loyalty. They had lost the hope of regaining their hegemony. Hence, it was their desperate last attempt. (N.G. Gore, *Janwani*, 8 February 1948)

The partition of India or Rs 55 crores were not the reasons behind the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The end of the sage was accomplished by the ideology of hatred, which was a result of the frustration of this Brahmin class, which had lost hope of regaining control over the social, economic and political machinery of this country. This is not merely an ideological thesis, but it has strong

evidence proving that attempts to murder Gandhiji were made even prior to 1947. It also proves beyond doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was not murdered for the partition or Rs 55 crores. This thesis stands proved.

Ideology

Mahatma Gandhi was not murdered for the partition of the country or Rs 55 crores. Evidence in support of this has been quoted in detail in this book. An attempt has been made to discuss the real reasons for the murder of Gandhiji. I am not a follower of Gandhiji. But I have been realizing his greatness as time progresses. He seems greater today than yesterday. Why is it so? It is because of the basis of Gandhiji's politics. However, while I am getting an opportunity to observe today's politics as a journalist, I am of the opinion that today's malady faced by this country is a result of our negligence of Gandhiji and his ideology. Today, politics is practised without bothering about morality, purity of means and adherence to truth. This is also the reason why Gandhiji seems to be greater and greater day by day. The philosophers of the world are saying that the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi are the only solution for the maladies of the world at large. It is therefore worthwhile to make a brief assessment of the politics of Gandhiji on this occasion.

The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the horizon of Indian politics rejuvenated politics and the entire country rose to resist the British. The popularity of Gandhiji saw ups and downs. There were misconceptions about his politics. Mahatma Gandhi himself might not have felt that his politics was hundred per cent perfect. However, if we take into consideration the circumstances prevailing then, we find that there was no alternative to the politics of Gandhiji; and even if such an alternative was available, the people would not have accepted it. The freedom struggle of the country could not be successful only under the leadership of parties which carried the flag of a progressive programme. It was the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi which brought success to the freedom struggle. During the movement of Gandhiji, there were innumerable leaders who were equally charismatic. There were leaders like Rajaji, Pandit Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad, to name a few. All these leaders stood shoulder to shoulder with Gandhiji loyally for twenty-two years, till 1942. However, when Gandhiji insisted that the Congress Party should accept truth and non-violence as its objectives, these leaders were put to the test and they refused to accept these principles. It was because they did not have faith in those principles. They accepted non-violence during the freedom struggle because they had no other alternative. It was also convenient for them. Differences of opinion arose between other leaders of the Congress and Gandhiji. These differences increased to a large extent on the issue of the partition of the country. These leaders of the Congress and Gandhiji had a falling apart.

The Congress leaders adopted a stance of not giving much importance to the opinion of Gandhiji on the issue of sharing of power between the Congress and the Muslim League. Those leaders whom Gandhiji considered to be his right and left hands, and who were considered to be his staunch followers–heirs, did not stand by his side. The partition of the country was agreed to by keeping Gandhiji in the dark. Therefore, Gandhiji also had to agree to the partition. This is the reason why Gandhiji was compelled to say, 'Vallabhbhai Patel once took pride in claiming himself as my Yes-Man, but now he is no longer listening to me.' He also said that he was honoured as the Father of the Nation because he had contributed immensely for spreading the movement of the Congress all over the country after returning from South Africa. But now, he felt he did not have any influence over the Congress. The influence of Gandhiji started weakening not because he changed his position, but because of the change in the stances of those who were with him. Some of them might have changed their views because they started dreaming of power. Some might have changed because they were not able to bear the burden of Gandhiji's ideology.

Mahatma Gandhi trained the political leaders and activists in his school of thought. He also created a brigade of activists dedicated to constructive work. Gandhiji trained the minds of common men for actual resistance; at the same time, he resorted to coordination, compromise and changing opinions. He conditioned the minds of the activists not to raise their hands against their assaulters, even taking the batons and bullets of the British on their chests. He engaged the activists in constructive work during the time when the struggle against the British was withdrawn or kept in abeyance. The army is sent into the barracks when there is no battle. The army descends on the battlefield on the orders of the commander. The army commander is endowed with certain rights by virtue of his power. Those who refuse to obey his orders are court-martialled or given stern punishment. Because of such an arrangement, the commander sends the army into the barracks whenever he wants. Gandhiji did not have any such power. In spite of this, it was he who ordered the activists and the masses to fight in the struggle and sent them into the barracks of 'constructive work'. There was no question of a court-martial.

'Power' was acquired by Gandhiji through his ideology and leadership. When he was punished, he established an organization named Gandhi Seva Sangh so as to ensure that his work continued. When the Congress contested his position on khadi, Gandhiji established the Akhil Bharatiya Charkha Sangh so as to keep the activists engaged in constructive work. Those who did not have adequate intelligence to comprehend the diplomacy of Gandhiji asked sarcastic questions as to how freedom could be won by spinning the *charkha*. Whereas the adherents of orthodox ideology, and those who were certain that their lost supremacy over society could not be regained due to the freedom won with

the help of Gandhiji's movement, realized that no society had secured freedom without a battle. The policy of the Hindu Mahasabha was antagonistic only towards the Congress. Their policy was to cooperate with the British directly. Savarkar, as the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, said, 'I do not see any point important enough, either in principle or in particulars, for starting the movement of disobedience of law and sacrifice, the benefits which are being made available for militarization of the Hindu society due to recruitment in the Army' (G.A. Deshpande, *Congress Story*). It became evident that power would not be vested in the hands of this class after Independence. There were pathetic attempts made by this class to propagate that it would not be real freedom if power was not in their hands. They established many organizations such as the Gramodyog Sangh and the Harijan Sevak Sangh which were based on the ideology of the Congress, but independent of it as far as work was concerned. Whenever struggles of collective resistance started, activists working in these organizations closed their work and jumped into the struggle. Because of Gandhiji, all these activists had acquired the qualities of intense loyalty, supreme sacrifice and willingness to withstand severe hardships, and hence, the common men were influenced by them. The rural masses depended on Congress workers for assistance in times of hardship. In contrast, now, the Congress workers have become associated with fraud, corruption and extortion. Why has this happened? It is because there are no activists who believe in the ideology of Gandhiji. The strength of Gandhiji were the constructive workers and hence the term 'Gandhibaba' was respected like a sacred hymn.

The principle of non-violence propounded by Gandhiji is being approved of in the world at large. A recent example of this can be taken from the Russian uprising, when Soviet tanks descended on the streets while the Communist regime was collapsing and Boris Yeltsin stood up on a tank, and yet the tanks remained silent. It is true that Yeltsin did not say that he was adopting the Gandhian way of struggle. However, he did adopt Gandhiji's theory of non-violence which proves that the armed forces are rendered useless in front of a wall of the common masses. While emphasizing the importance of the theory of Gandhiji, Albert Einstein commented that people would not believe after some years that there lived a man of flesh named Gandhi on this earth. Do we require other words to describe the greatness of Gandhiji? Martin Luther King Jr. also continued his struggle on the basis of Gandhiji's principles. In the chamber of Martin Luther King, there were no photographs of any other leader than Gandhiji. The non-violence of Gandhiji was not the non-violence of a coward. The statement of Gandhiji that 'I will offer my other cheek if I am slapped on one cheek' has been distorted and misquoted by separating it from its original reference. Gandhiji had made this statement referring to the atrocities perpetrated against Harijans, and said that if they slapped him on one cheek, he would offer the other cheek. Moreover, non-violence is put to

test when one tries to be peaceful by controlling one's anger. It is necessary to keep this in mind.

Gandhiji thought over everything with a long-term vision. He also took into consideration the limitations of the use of this theory. He knew that the Congress was like an ocean. There were streams of different ideologies in it. He believed that the freedom movement would not be effective if all these streams were not united. He also knew that in an organization based on class, people would come together only for their particular class interests. The strength of the masses would splinter into various organizations such as peasants' organizations, workers' organizations, etc. The strength of the Congress was to be concentrated on fighting against the British, and hence it had to be 'all-inclusive'. Class-wise division would have weakened the strength of the movement. Gandhiji, like Lokmanya Tilak, was of the opinion that the freedom movement must be made more effective by securing participation of the Muslims also, even at the cost of giving more privileges to them. Gandhiji was of the opinion that the Congress should be dissolved and transformed into a Lok Seva Sangh. He had a long vision behind this. Congress was an alliance of people of various ideologies. Such an alliance was necessary for fighting against foreign rulers. However, he took a stand that the Congress should be dissolved because he felt that the people would accept an organization which safeguarded their interests, rather than an organization of people having contradictory interests, after Independence. He was of the opinion that those who believed in constructive work should work in the Lok Seva Sangh, and those interested in organizations indulging in the politics of class interest should start such organizations. If this had happened, those who came to power after the Independence would not, perhaps, have come to power. And hence, they did not find the proposal of dissolving the Congress acceptable. Gandhiji said that if at all the Congress was to be continued, then the socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan or Acharya Narendra Dev should be made president of the Congress. He said this not because of his affection for both of them, but because he hoped that if the socialist leaders became presidents of the Congress, it would gain recognition as an organization based on the politics of safeguarding the interests of the poor, toilers and peasants, on account of the fact that it would be an organization run on the basis of socialist ideology. This is the reason why he sent a message to the leader of the Socialist Party, Barrister Purushottamdas Trikamdas, to postpone his decision of leaving the Congress by a few days. Gandhiji said that he would perhaps join the Socialist Party once his hunger strike (13 January 1948) was over. He might have been seriously thinking about it. If Gandhiji had in fact joined the Socialist Party, would Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru have remained in the Congress? They too would have been compelled to join the Socialist Party, and Gandhiji would have achieved his objective without dissolution of the Congress and

without establishment of the Lok Seva Sangh. This is my assessment. It is based on the statements of Gandhiji and the logical conclusions derived from them. The reader may accept my assessment or just ignore it.

Gandhiji opposed parliamentary democracy in Britain in his book *Hind Swaraj*. However, he insisted on individual freedom and also opposed the centralization of power. In the book, Gandhiji wrote about the parliamentary democracy of England thus:

> The circumstances existing today in England are really pathetic. And it is my prayer before God that Hindustan should never have such circumstances. The parliament of England which you call the mother of the parliament, is in fact infertile and a prostitute. Both these words are hard but they are perfectly applicable to it. I called it infertile because the said parliament had not accomplished a single good work by taking self-initiative. It will not do anything unless there is somebody to bring pressure from outside. This is its inherent character, and it is called a prostitute because it [the parliament] stays with the cabinet which controls it.

It means that Gandhiji did not refute the right of individual freedom. It is a fact that the parliament does not legislate reforms by self-initiative unless and until there are movements outside to bring pressure on it. However, which system of governance is better than parliamentary democracy today? These thoughts of Gandhiji about democracy did not advocate dictatorship, but he was sceptical about British parliamentary democracy. Instead, he felt that the '*gram swaraj*' in India was more democratic. The concentration of economic power which takes place in a capitalist society is fatal for both social justice and utility. It was Gandhiji's opinion that there must be social restrictions on individual freedom because of the possibility of anarchy if every man behaves on the basis of his inner desires, which would go against the inner desires of another man. However, such restrictions must be limited. And they should be applicable to all equally, and should also be consistent with the principles of social justice. Gandhiji said that changes should be made in the restrictions with the consent of the majority and as per the need of the society. He believed that the ultimate aim of the political movement should be a self-governed society. He believed that one government would perish and another government would take its place through armed revolution. However, it would be based on violence, and a government based on violence would terrorize the masses and suppress them. Violence begets violence and all energy is concentrated on making the opposite party accept its own proposals. It does not generate an atmosphere of spontaneous cooperation. Therefore, Gandhiji avoided the path of violence and compulsion. His ideology was to avoid *these* paths. Gandhiji believed that the noble path for social change was to convince the masses and

make their minds favourable towards reforms, and to give proper direction to the stream of social life. He emphasized that we must satisfy ourselves even if we take each step ahead on the path of truth by adhering to the principle of purity of means. He knew that society was under the influence of old traditions and people would oppose social reform. Therefore, the only way was to convince and impress upon them the need for such reforms by bringing about change in their hearts.

Mahatma Gandhi said about inculcating national unity that

> there are people following various religions in Hindustan. However, it does not affect the national unity. It is not a fact that new people joining society will damage national unity. They will merge themselves with others. Then only, it can be said that a particular country is one nation. Such a country must have a quality of assimilating different groups. It was so in Hindustan and even it is so, now. The people of a nation do not interfere into the religions of each others. In any nation of the world, one nation does not mean one religion.

It can be realized from these opinions why Gandhiji advocated the unity of Hindus and Muslims.

Even though Gandhiji was an orthodox Hindu, his ideology was different from that of the Hindutva forces. The Hindutva forces were fundamentalists. They did not agree, because of their fundamentalism, that all men are equal and have equal natural rights. This is the reason why they are loyal to the ideology of Hindu hegemony over social and economic affairs, and hence they are not willing to give equal rights to women and the downtrodden. Hence, they try to organize the Hindu masses by appealing to the loyalty of Hindus towards their own religion. They try their best to create hatred against people of other religions.

The ideas of Gandhiji were in total contrast to this ideology. He did not differentiate between religions. The reality is that this country has not remained backward because of the Muslims. The country was backward even before the arrival of Muslims here. During the medieval period, a Hindu king attacked another Hindu king. Battles were fought between them. The Hindu kings demolished and plundered Hindu temples. Hence, religion cannot be the basis of nationalism.

It was of paramount importance for Gandhiji that all castes, tribes, religions and sects should cooperate for national unity. Therefore, he advocated secular nationalism and equality of all religions, as far as political and social issues were concerned. Gandhiji blended Hindu religion with modern humanism. This was the reason for his popularity. Those who could not digest all this felt that Gandhiji was against their interests; they were hoping for social

control to come into their hands but were now convinced that this would not happen only because of Gandhiji. Hence, they were obsessed with the idea of eliminating Gandhiji.

Those who believed in the theory of committing political murder of their opponents murdered Gandhiji with the sole intention of eliminating his ideology, which was contradictory to their own. The Hindutva forces did not have the honesty and strength to admit this, and hence they put forth the reason that they killed Gandhiji for the partition and Rs 55 crores. However, as pointed repeatedly in the preceding chapters, the bomb attack in Pune of 1934, the Panchgani incident in July 1944, the incident at Sevagram which could have been fatal for Gandhiji in August 1944, and the unsuccessful attempt at killing Gandhiji by sabotaging the railway in June 1946, were all prior to the issues of partition and Rs 55 crores. When Gandhiji said, in 1946, that he would live for 125 years, Nathuram Godse himself said that he would not be allowed to live that long, and thus declared his intention of murdering Gandhiji.

The Central Home Minister, the police and the Home Minister of Bombay Province were aware of the conspiracy to murder Gandhi fifteen days prior to the murder, and still Gandhiji's life could not be saved. I have discussed on the basis of evidence how it was possible to save Gandhiji's life. His murder could take place because of the negligence of the government, its 'secret' collusion with the Hindutva forces and the personal ego conflicts of the leaders. If the government, and that includes the police, had acted diligently and with intelligence, the end of the sage would not have taken place in such a manner.

Gandhiji was not responsible for the partition. It was his opinion, based on his politics of morality, that Pakistan should be given Rs 55 crores as agreed. However, attempts were made to kill Gandhiji since 1934 and the attempt of 30 January 1948 was successful. The believer in an ideology of equal treatment to all religions for national unity and the dreamer of a society based on equality was murdered by opponents of his ideology. However, the wheel of change cannot be halted by such murders. It may seem to have halted for some time but it is dynamic. The ideology of the Hindutva forces will never be successful by such a temporary victory.

Notes

1 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Volume 2.
2 N.R. Phatak, *Development of Indian Nationalism*.
3 N.R. Phatak, *Development of Indian Nationalism*.
4 D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 6.
5 Swami Vivekanand Books Collection.
6 Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of Partition*.
7 Govind Talwalkar, *Transfer of Power: 1947*, Volume 2.
8 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Volume 1.
9 Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*.
10 D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 7.

[11] 'Gandhi Thoughts, Hindu Religion', *Young India*, 6 October 1921.
[12] Swami Vivekanand Books Collection.
[13] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*.
[14] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Volume 2.
[15] Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*.
[16] Prof. Nalini Pandit, *Gandhi*.
[17] D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 8.
[18] Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*.
[19] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Volume 2.
[20] D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 6.
[21] Vasant Palashikar, 'Mahatma Gandhi's Muslim Politics', *Dainik Pudhari*, 14 November 1993.
[22] Govind Talwalkar, *Maharashtra Times*, 26 November 1993.
[23] Swami Vivekanand Books Collection.
[24] Vasant Palashikar, 'Mahatma Gandhi's Muslim Politics', *Dainik Pudhari*, 14 November 1993.
[25] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 2.
[26] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Volume 1 (footnote p. 713).
[27] D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 7.
[28] D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 7.
[29] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 2.
[30] Rajaji, *Gandhiji's Teachings and Philosophy*.
[31] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 2.
[32] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 2.
[33] Home Secretary R.N. Banerjee's testimony before Justice Kapur Commission.
[34] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 1
[35] K.L. Punjabi and Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 1.
[36] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 1.
[37] Sir Sultan Ahmad, *A Treaty between India and the United Kingdom*.
[38] Justice Kapur Commission Report, Volume 2 (para 19.56).
[39] N.R. Phatak, *Development of Indian Nationalism*.
[40] N.G. Gore, *Janvani*, 8 February 1948.

upper-class Vaishnava Bania (Vaishya) family. Thus, non-violence and vegetarianism were innate to him. It appears that he got his weapon of satyagraha (coercive method of self-suffering to press a demand) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) from the Indian woman, especially his own wife, who exercised great influence on the man through her moral strength and non-violent satyagraha, even while entirely dependent on him—financially and socially. However, Gandhiji very well knew the limitations of these two weapons which can be used only against one who may have some common interest with the user and has a sense of justice. Thus, Gandhiji used non-violent satyagraha against the British and the depressed-classes leader, B.R. Ambedkar, but never against the Muslim League or its leaders because the last one had nothing in

Ambedkar, but never against the Muslim League which had nothing in common with Gandhiji nor did they have the same sense of justice.

industrialization and urbanization. Gandhiji favoured only such simple machines (like the sewing machine) as would bring happiness to all. He abhored all those machines that aimed at making profits or exploitation beyond one's actual

national service... our intellect has been segregated, we have been isolated from the masses, the best mind of the nation has become gagged... It is a national tragedy. The first and the greatest social service we can render is to revert to our vernaculars, to restore Hindi to its natural place as the national language and begin carrying on all our provincial proceedings in our respective vernaculars and national proceedings in Hindi... (M.K. Gandhi, *Evils Wrought by the English Medium* edited by P.K. Prabhu, p.8, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, Sep. 1958)

Incidentally, Gandhiji had only an inkling of the above thoughts, which became firm after he read certain European philosophers and authors, such as Tolstoy, Sherard, Carpenter, Thoreau, Ruskin and others. In the bibliography of 20 books on *Hind Swaraj*, only two were by Indian authors, one by

failed. After 1920, Gandhiji's superiors. ■

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R. S. S. Leader Presented Godse With Revolver

Countrywide Arrests Continue

NAGPUR, Feb. 6.

According to very reliable information, the revolver Godse used to assassinate Gandhiji was presented to him at Nagpur by one of the R.S.S. leaders who has been taken in custody. According to the same source he was given a send-off by the owner of the revolver and the Editor of a Marathi daily.

Thursday passed off peacefully except for searches at various places. A dozen persons were arrested, prominent among them being Prof. Varahadpande of the City College. Another Professor of Science of the College who, it is alleged, had said to his students a day before Gandhiji's assassination that he (Gandhiji) would be murdered, disapeared.

Two fire-engines of the Nagpur Municipality were sent to Umrer, about 3 miles from here, on receipt of news that houses of leading lights of the R.S.S were set on fire.

Plot to Murder Leaders

Alleged Member of Gang Taken to Lucknow

BENARES, Feb. 5.

After preliminary interrogation by the Police here, Devendra Kumar Wadse, an alleged associate of the gang, which is reported to have plotted the assassination of top-ranking national leaders, has been sent to Lucknow under armed escort.

Devendra Kumar is reported to have surrendered himself to the District Magistrate of Mirzapur on Monday last.

He was brought here for interrogation.—A.P.I.

Measures to Check Leakage

Murder of the Greatest Hindu

D.R. GOYAL

'On 30th January, 1948 while Bapu was on his way to a prayer meeting three shots were fired at him from a revolver. Bapu fell and died soon after. Nathuram Godse was the man responsible for the murder. He had been a worker of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in Poona and also the editor of a paper,' wrote Morarji Desai in his autobiography published in 1974.[1]

The name of the RSS has been associated with the murder of Gandhi ever since the ghastly deed was done, the vehement protestations of the RSS to the contrary notwithstanding. The charge has stuck in spite of the fact that the RSS chief, who had been arrested and put in the dock along with the other accused, had been cleared of the charge at an early stage of the trial. It was recalled by the then vice-president K.R. Narayanan when he commented that the demolition of Babri Masjid (at Ayodhya) was the most heinous crime after the assassination of Gandhi.

According to the protagonists of the RSS, it is the result of 'a communist conspiracy' to defame and demoralize 'a nationalist organisation', a political gimmick employed by those who are afraid of its growing popularity and influence. Even if that were true it could be said that they are getting a taste of their own medicine in the sense that their chief weapon in public controversies and political battles is character assassination. They would attribute the worst kind of criminal motives to a person who dares to differ from them or criticize their theories and practices.

I recall an incident of 1946. In a newspaper a photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru had appeared which showed somebody lighting his cigarette. That photograph was cut out and kept by a number of Sangh workers in that area of Hoshiarpur (where I was also a minor functionary of the RSS) to be shown to simple-minded, credulous small-town folk as an evidence of the personal degradation of the man. It was presented as a kind of obscenity. While showing that to people, the RSS men would comment: 'Look, if this man is not ashamed of being photographed with a cigarette between his lips what would he not be doing in private?' One has only to imagine the reaction, particu-

larly of the middle class (the petit bourgeoisie as they are called) in the social milieu of a *mofussil* town. Other photographs in this repertoire were those of Nehru shaking hands with Lady Mountbatten, and his sister Vijayalaxmi Pandit wearing a sleeveless blouse and sitting, bare-headed, around a table in all-male company of Indians and foreigners.

This incident is only the tip of the iceberg that is their arsenal of character assassination; the morbid details which they give are such that no civilized person would like to repeat. For obvious reasons these things do not appear in the press, except as innuendoes and insinuations and that too only in the house journals of the RSS like *Organiser*. But that is heard every day in the streets so that the uncommitted and the uninitiated feel exasperated and, on hearing such charges, only say: 'Damn it, don't they say all kinds of things about other people.' This atmosphere, in a way, helps the RSS because the contention becomes pro- and anti- and nobody bothers about going into the facts of the case and understand the validity of the charge or the lack of it.

The loss of Gandhi to India at a crucial juncture of Indian history should not, and cannot, be treated so lightly. On the understanding of the phenomenon depends quite a lot of the future of at least this part of the world because the developments of India–Pakistan relations and Hindu–Muslim relations would certainly have been significantly different but for the removal of Gandhi from the scene. The destruction of what Mountbatten described as a 'one-man peace-keeping force' is not something to be treated as a mere allegation going round in a political maelstrom.

In his broadcast to the nation after the murder on January 30, 1948 Jawaharlal Nehru said: 'A mad man has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough poison spread in this country during the past years and months, and this poison has had an effect on people's minds. We must face this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us, and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them.'[2] Later in a meeting in Ramlila Grounds, Delhi, he again pointed out: 'What we have to see is how and why even one man among 400 millions could cause this terrible wound on our country. How an atmosphere was created in which people like him could act in that manner and yet dare to call themselves Indians.'[3]

Facing the poison and getting rid of it implies spotting its source and treating it. Jawaharlal had traced the source to the RSS. In a letter to Sardar Patel on February 26, 1948 he wrote: 'More and more I have come to the conclusion that Bapu's murder was not an isolated business but part of a much wider campaign organised chiefly by the RSS.'[4]

If the conclusion or diagnosis of the ailment, whatever you call it, arrived at by Jawaharlal is unfounded, the sooner it is rejected the better because then only would it be possible to look for the source of poison elsewhere and

deal with it adequately. And if one goes through the newspapers of the period one finds that he was not alone to have come to that conclusion; Ram Manohar Lohia, J.P. Narayan and several other people concurred with him and, in fact, criticized the then home minister for showing leniency towards the RSS. We know that several of these gentlemen, in later years, thought it fit to act in alliance with the RSS and tended to curb their earlier anti-RSS ferocity. But that can be clearly seen as more a concession to political expediency than concern for truth. The case of Morarji Desai in this regard is very pertinent.

We have quoted his firm opinion in this matter, particularly the relationship between the RSS and the assassin, as expressed in his autobiography. This quotation used to be read out by a guide at the New Delhi Gandhi Smriti, P.N. Damodaran Nayar by name. It was a part of the narration of the story of martyrdom and no objections had ever been raised till the coming of Janata Party to power. On October 8, 1977 when Morarji, the Prime Minister, accompanied by his colleague Sikandar Bakht, the minister of Housing, paid a visit to Gandhi Smriti, this part of the guide's narration was brought to his notice, apparently by some RSS members and sympathisers, as something objectionable. 'The Prime Minister's spontaneous reaction,' reports the guide who was a witness to it, 'was that these were facts of history and that nobody can change history.'[5] Thereafter the guide was beaten up by some Vidyarthi Parishad boys and was unceremoniously dismissed by the management under the control and influence of the Housing ministry. When this question was raised in Parliament, Morarji declared on the floor of the House that he no longer held the opinion which he had expressed in his autobiography. The reason for this somersault on the part of the octogenarian Prime Minister is too obvious to bear repetition. It however provides a glaring instance of the defence of the RSS being motivated by considerations of political expediency.

And yet, objectivity demands that we have a full look at the case of the RSS. We quote in full, including the emphasis on points, what has been issued for public by the publication department of the RSS, Suruchi Sahitya:

RSS and Gandhi Murder

In a number of speeches during the emergency and earlier, Smt. Indira Gandhi condemned RSS elements as the assassins of Mahatma Gandhi We are really amazed to read it. This is very grave and heinous charge and no responsible person is expected to make it, for it is totally false in view of the following facts.

In the first place, it is noteworthy that in his letter to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru (dated 27th February 1948) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister, Government of India, wrote:

Sardar Patel's Testimony: 'I have kept myself almost in daily touch with the progress of the investigations regarding Bapu's assassination case. I

devoted a large part of my evening to discussing with Sanjivi the day's progress and giving instructions to him on any points that arise. All the main accused have given long and detailed statements of their activities. In one case, the statement extends to ninety typed pages. From their statements it is quite clear that no part of the conspiracy took place in Delhi. The centres of activities were Poona, Bombay, Ahmednagar and Gwalior. Delhi was of course the terminating point of their activity, but by no means its centre; nor do they seem to have spent more than a day or two at a time, and that only twice between 19 and 30 January. *It also clearly emerges from the statements that the RSS was not involved in it at all.* It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha – that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through. It also appears that the conspiracy was limited to some ten men of whom all except two have been got hold of. Every bit of these statements is being carefully checked up and verified and scrutinised and, where necessary, followed up. Sanjivi devotes a considerable time every day to it. Senior officers of Bombay and CP are in charge of investigation. Delhi police hardly comes in the picture.' (*Sarder Patel's Correspondence*, Vol. 6, 1945–50, edited by Durga Das)

Thereafter the Gandhi Murder Trial commenced on June 22, 1948 in the historic Red Fort in Delhi before Shri Atmacharan, who was specially appointed for the purpose. Appeal was heard by a full bench of East Punjab High Court, at Shimla from May 2, 1949. Final judgement was delivered on June 21, 1949 and the guilty punished.

Many persons who are educated and old enough have followed the proceedings of the trial as they appeared in papers in those days. Sri C.K. Daphtary, the then Advocate General, Bombay, was in charge of the prosecution. The prosecution in putting its case before the learned judge did not try to involve the RSS in the conspiracy. *It did not even hint, much less prove, even the remotest connection of the RSS with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The RSS is not blamed anywhere in the judgement delivered in the case.*

Kapur Commission: In November 1966, the Government of India again instituted another inquiry into Gandhi murder. A commission was set up under Shri J.L. Kapoor, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to make a fresh and thorough inquiry into the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi, though in a different context. The commission sat at different places and examined 101 witnesses and 407 documents before it published its report in 1969. *The commission also cleared the RSS of any connection with the crime.*

One of the important witnesses was Shri R.N. Banerjee, ICS, (witness 19) who was the Home Secretary of the Central Government at the time of the murder. The evidence of Shri R.N. Banerjee was:

'*It has not been proved that they (the accused) were members of the RSS.*' (*Kapoor Commission Report*, Part I, p. 165)

> The witness further says that even if the RSS had been banned earlier, it would not have affected the conspirators or the course of events, 'because *they (the accused) have not been proved to have been members of the RSS nor has that organisation been shown to have a hand in the murder*'. (Ibid., p. 186)
>
> Shri R.N. Banerjee further stated, 'Although RSS was banned it should not be taken to be an acceptance by the Government of the allegation that the murder of Mahatma Gandhi was by the members of RSS as such.' (Ibid., Part II, p. 62)
>
> The Commission comments:
>
> '*In Delhi also there is no evidence that the RSS as such was indulging in violent activities against Mahatma Gandhi or the top Congress leaders.*' (Ibid., p. 66).
>
> 'The facts are self-evident and more eloquent than all the mispropaganda by the interested parties.'

If there had ever been a simple statement that the RSS denounces and repudiates the action of Godse as also the reasons he gave for it, the charge could be cleared. It would at least have been possible to believe that a change of heart had taken place after the shocking manifestation of their 'culture'. But no! The defence is based on what they think are the chinks in the argument of the other side. And that makes the defence worse because the whole argument suffers from *suggestio falsi, suppressio veri*. A tendency to politicize the issue and take advantage of the present political atmosphere has been betrayed in picking on Indira Gandhi as the accuser. The period of Emergency has also been hinted at to vitiate thinking by wrapping it in the haze of strong sentiments about the Emergency days. It should not however be forgotten that the charge had been made and maintained by even those whom the RSS may not find it easy to dismiss as irresponsible.

Coming to the substantial part, take what they call Sardar Patel's testimony, which is a letter that the Sardar had written in reply to the above-mentioned letter by Jawaharlal Nehru. One would like to know why they have not cared to look at another letter, in the same volume, which the Sardar had sent to Dr S.P. Mookherjee in reply to his entreaty on behalf of the RSS and the Mahasabha. There is a very significant passage in it which reads:

> As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organisations, but *our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible.* There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy. *The activities of the RSS constituted a*

clear threat to the existence of Government and the State. Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down. Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure.[6]

The letter of February 27 written to Jawaharlal is quoted but the letter of July 18 written to Dr Mookherjee is not quoted. Why? And a subsequent one of September 11, 1948 addressed to the RSS chief Golwalkar himself is also forgotten although it is part of a publication issued by the Prakashan Vibhag of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, Karnataka. We quote it, both in the interest of fair argument and for correcting the distortion of Sardar's image that the enlistment as defence witness by the RSS entails. Lest we be charged of misquotation or partial quotation we quote in full without making any changes:

Aurangzeb Road
New Delhi
Date: 11th Sept. 1948

Brother Sri Golwalkar,

Received your letter dated 11th August. Jawaharlal has also sent me your letter of the same date.

You are very well aware of my views about the RSS. I have expressed those thoughts at Jaipur in December last and at Lucknow in January. The people had welcomed those views. I had hoped that your people also would accept them. But they appear to have had no effect on RSS persons, nor was there any change in their programmes. There can be no doubt that the RSS did service to the Hindu Society. In the areas where there was the need for help and organisation, the young men of the RSS protected women and children and strove much for their sake. No person of understanding could have a word of objection regarding that. But the objectionable part arose when they, burning with revenge, began attacking Mussalmans. Organising the Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing.

Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people. *All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthuse the Hindus and organise for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji.* Even an iota of the sympathy of the Government or of the people no more remained for the RSS. In fact opposition grew. Opposition turned

more severe, *when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death*. Under these conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS.

Since then, over six months have elapsed. *We had hoped that after this lapse of time, with full and proper consideration the RSS persons would come to the right path. But from the reports that come to me, it is evident that attempts to put fresh life into their same old activities are afoot*. I once again ask you to give your thought to my Jaipur and Lucknow speeches and accept the path I had indicated for the RSS. I am quite certain that therein lies the good of the RSS and of the country and moving on that path we can join hands in achieving the welfare of our country. Of course, you are aware that we are passing through delicate times. It is the duty of every one from the highest to the lowliest in the country to contribute his mite, in whatever way possible, to the service of the country. In this delicate hour there is no place for party conflicts and old quarrels. I am thoroughly convinced that the RSS men can carry on their patriotic endeavour only by joining the Congress and not by keeping separate or by opposing. I am glad that you have been released. I hope that you will arrive at proper decision after due consideration of what I have said above. With regard to the restrictions imposed upon you I am in correspondence with the CP Government. I shall let you know after receiving their reply.

Yours
(Sd.) VALLABH BHAI PATEL
Offers Vandematram.
[Rendered from the original in Hindi][7]

The next argument is based upon the voluminous report of the Kapoor Commission. With regard to that the first thing to be kept in mind is that the question of direct involvement of the RSS was not written in the terms of reference of the inquiry. Yet because it has been referred to it is better that we examine the report. For obvious reasons it has been thought fit to quote the evidence of only one witness[8] and omit other evidence which is no less relevant. For example the deposition of J.N. Sahni which the Commission sums up as follows:

> 19.56 Mr J.N. Sahni (witness No. 95) *has deposed to a secret organisation but did not directly mention it as RSS. He said that it was being openly discussed in those days, i.e., about the time of the Birla House bomb, that there was a secret organisation with about 6 lakh volunteers which would stage a coup d'etat* and the organisation had secret cells in different parts of India including the Punjab, Maharashtra, etc. It was then being rumoured that its leader was Golwalkar, Bhopatkar or Dr Khare and that its volun-

> teers were being trained in Alwar, Bharatpur and some other places with the objective of overthrowing the government after killing the top leaders and when Mahatma Gandhi was murdered it was considered to be a part of the plan and stringent measures were taken. He also said that there was a secret political movement helped by some princes through their chieftains, creating a fifth column in India to take over when the British power withdrew, at least in their respective states. The princes named by him were Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Baroda and Bhopal. This movement was led by Golwalkar from Nagpur, and Bhopatkar from Poona, and the concentration of leadership was there.

On this the Commission comments in the next para: '*19.57 As far as the Commission is aware, Guruji Golwalkar was and is the head of the RSS movement.* Mr. Sahni did not ascribe these activities to the RSS but just mentioned a secret movement.'

Sahni's reference to the secret movement helped by some princes through chieftains gets elaborated in the evidence of Hooja and connects it with the RSS:

> 19.60 Mr. Hooja's reports, Ex. 95, show that *at Alwar there was a training camp of RSS in May–June 1947 which received the patronage of the Prime Minister Dr Khare and the Home Minister with the knowledge of the ruler.* It was also reported that both these Ministers took a prominent part in helping the RSS activities and the Prime Minister extended it the fullest patronage. They received military training in the beginning of February and were put up in one of the military barracks. They did firing practice with muzzle loaders and also secret training in rifle and revolver practice.

There was also the evidence of B.B.L. Jaitley, a senior intelligence officer, who had prepared 600–700 cases against the RSS and had told Sardar Patel that 'something terrible may happen'. The Commission reports: 'When he told Sardar Patel that something serious would happen he did not mean murder of Mahatma Gandhi but it might have happened to Sardar Patel or to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.' It surely does not absolve the RSS but indicates wider dimensions of a possible conspiracy in which the organization was involved.[9]

Now we come to the question involved in the assertion that although a legal luminary like C.K. Daphtary, the then advocate general, was prosecuting the case in the court he 'did not even hint, much less prove, even the remotest connection of RSS'. That, dear friends, does not vouch for the innocence of the RSS or that it was not an agency which created the atmosphere in which one man dared to act the way he did. He certainly was not a mad man as was the first impression of Jawaharlal Nehru immediately after the murder. If

it proves anything it is that those at the helm of affairs thought it fit to stick to the letter of the law. The assassin had confessed to the crime and denied the charge of conspiracy at the instance of any party or person. In fact he asserted: 'The prosecution's attempt to make out that I was a mere tool in someone else's hands is an aspersion which is far from the truth. Indeed, it is a perversion of it.'[10]

The advocate general had the brief to bring to book the person who had committed the crime and his associates, if any.

The jurisprudence that India followed then, and does even now, does not treat a philosophy, an organization or a group liable to punishment even when a crime of such momentous import is involved. Even if it were proved that assassin Godse was a member of the RSS at that point of time it would not legally prove the culpability of the RSS unless it could be established that a responsible body of the organisation had formally met, taken the decision to assassinate Gandhi and duly assigned the task to Nathuram Godse. It was obviously not there on record and the advocate general would have only chased a mirage if he had taken the line of proving that Godse was only a tool in the hands of the RSS. Like a good criminal lawyer and advocate he concentrated on the person of Godse and his immediate associates whose complicity and abetment was beyond reasonable doubt.

Let it be clear that the brief of Daphtary was not political but personal. And the handicaps in going after the RSS were too many. In the first place the RSS maintains no register of membership, issues no membership cards, charges no fee against receipt and there is no way of establishing before a court of law that a certain person is a member and invariably acts according to its discipline or diktat. Secondly, the RSS is not an organization of bold revolutionaries who would declare their intentions in advance. In fact that is the basic difference between revolutionary or communist violence and counter-revolutionary or fascist violence of the RSS kind. Those like Bhagat Singh who take to the former are not apologetic about it, they keep secrecy about an action only in order to ensure its success; the latter are ashamed of owning their deed and try to keep it secret even after it has been accomplished. One is never in doubt about the moral justification of the deed while the other is never sure of it, rather, does it as a crime.

What is the truth about Godse's RSS connection? The RSS has been at pains for years to deny that he was ever a member of the RSS. Although Curran had discovered it in 1950–51[11] the information remained buried in the files of the Institute of Pacific Relations[12] till it was referred to by a writer on the Jana Sangh, Craig Baxter, in 1968. Godse himself had stated before the Court: 'I have worked for several years in RSS and subsequently joined the Hindu Mahasabha. . .'[13] The most significant is the revelation by his brother about the last moments of his life: 'On reaching the platform they recited a

verse of devotion to the Motherland: *Namaste sada vatsale Matrubhume, tvayaa Hindubhume, sukhamvardhito-hum, / Mahamangale punya bhume tvadarthe, patitvesh kaaya namaste namaste.*'

This is the opening verse of the RSS prayer sung in every *shakha* and outsiders are not acquainted with it, except for academic reasons. At the time of Godse's membership of the RSS, around 1932 – as admitted in these statements – this prayer was not sung even in the RSS. As we have already indicated, in those days the Marathi–Hindi prayer was in currency. The Sanskrit prayer, of which this verse forms a part, was adopted only in 1940. How did Godse take it up as a kind of epitaph on his life? The denial of connection surrounds the whole affair with an air of suspicion.

Having scrutinized the arguments of the RSS we would like to assert once again that it was nobody's case that the RSS provided the pistol and the other means with which Godse murdered Gandhi. Everybody, from Jawaharlal Nehru downward, has been talking of the kind of atmosphere and the culture that induces thoughts and sentiments which lead to such a heinous act. Before we proceed to analyse the attitude of the RSS towards Gandhi it may be relevant to ask whether there was grief or jubilation in the RSS circles. The RSS chief had issued a formal condemnation and also declared that they would observe mourning for thirteen days. But what was happening in the *shakhas*? Gandhi's private secretary Pyarelal writes:

> A letter which Sardar Patel received after the assassination from a young man, who according to his own statement had been gulled into joining the RSS organisation but was later disillusioned, described how members of the RSS at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the 'good news'. After the news, sweets were distributed in RSS circles at several places, including Delhi. When the RSS was later banned by an order of the government, the local police chief in one of the Indian states, according to the Sardar's correspondent, sent word to the organisers to close their office 'for thirteen days' as a sign of mourning, and disperse but not to disband. The rot was so insidious and widespread that only the supreme sacrifice could arrest or remove it.[14]

Pyarelal's book has been cited as one of the evidences by the Kapoor Commission (paras 19.64 and 19.65) and it reads:

> 19.64 At page 687 of his book Pyarelal had said the following:
> 'The RSS was a communalist, para–military, fascist organisation, controlled from Maharashtra. The key positions were held almost exclusively by the Maharashtrians. Their declared object was to set up Hindu Raj. They had adopted the slogan, Muslims clear out of India. At the time they were not very active, at least overtly, but it was being darkly hinted that they were

only waiting for all the Hindus and Sikhs in West Pakistan to be evacuated. They would then wreak full vengeance on the Indian Muslims for what Pakistan had done.

'Gandhiji was determined not to be a living witness to such a tragedy. The Muslims were in a minority in the Indian Union. Why should they feel insecure as to their future as equal citizens in the Indian Union? There was much they had to answer for and correct. But it was up to the majority community to be magnanimous and to forgive and forget.'

19.65 At page 751 Pyarelal has written that there was a vast network of an organisation under the direct encouragement, direction and control of RSS with the object of planning and carrying out pogroms against Muslims as a part of the cruel war of brutality and counter–brutality, reprisals and counter reprisals . . . their activities including collection and distribution of arms and ammunition.

Pyarelal, in fact, provides the clue to the soil and the seed which yielded the mind that issued itself in the crime:

Maharashtra has a strong tradition of militant Hindu nationalism. It is the citadel of Brahmin orthodoxy of a most exclusive and rigid type. In self-dedication, patriotism, sacrifice and renunciation, it has produced exemplars which it would be difficult to excel. But its idealism has very often been mixed with a rugged pragmatism and cynical view of life and politics which was diametrically opposed to that of Gandhiji. Some of the proponents of this outlook had somehow come to feel, quite unwarrantably, that the rise of Gandhiji's philosophy was the cause of the memory of that great leader of Maharashtra, the late Lokmanya Tilak, and the premier position that Maharashtra had in the country's politics during his lifetime, being eclipsed. They regarded Gandhiji's political leadership and movement of non-violence with a strong, concentrated feeling of antipathy and frustration which found expression in a sustained campaign of calumny against Gandhiji for over a quarter of a century. The fact that in spite of it a growing section in Maharashtra rallied to Gandhiji's movement further exasperated them and deepened their sense of frustration. It was this section that had tried to bomb Gandhiji in 1934 at Poona while he was engaged in his anti-untouchability campaign. *Their plans this time were far more systematic and thorough, and included such refinements as conditioning the minds of the youth for their prospective task by making them wear, as a part of their training, photos of Congress leaders like Pandit Nehru and others besides Gandhiji inside their shoes, and using the same for target practice with fire-arms etc.*

Angered by Gandhiji's peace mission in Delhi, this group decided to remove him from the scene. Gandhiji's fast and subsequent release by the Indian government of 55 crores to Pakistan enraged them still further. On

> top of it, atrocity stories and tales of unimaginable crimes against Hindu womanhood kept pouring in from Kashmir. Popular sentiment was systematically worked up by deliberately concocted propaganda.[15]

We have already gone into the Gandhi–RSS relationship at some length earlier. It is enough to point out that every RSS man, from Hedgewar downwards, castigated Gandhi as the harbinger of the policy of appeasement while they were also all the time keen to make peace with him on terms that he should only bless them and not go into ideological questions. Hedgewar made the first major attempt in 1934 when the first signs of manifest estrangement between the RSS and the Congress came on surface. But he found Gandhi too firmly rooted in reason for the beliefs he held and propagated to be converted to the ideas of Hindu nationalism and maintaining status quo in caste etc.

The tragic happenings in 1947 again brought them in open, direct confrontation – perhaps more bitter than the earlier one. The language of Golwalkar became extraordinarily strident. He thought the Congress tradition of Gandhi and Nehru was making Hindu society 'impotent' and 'imbecile'. To adequately communicate the quality of Golwalkar's utterances of that period one has to quote at length because otherwise the reader is likely to doubt the very veracity of the statement, so astounding is the quality of pronouncements. Here is what he says about the policy of communal unity:

> Thus, due to the utter lack of will and conviction on the part of our leaders to face the Muslim intransigence squarely from the standpoint of undiluted nationalism, were sown the seeds of Muslim appeasement. In their phantom chase of achieving new unity and new nationality, our leaders raised the slogan of 'Hindu–Muslim unity' and declared that anything that stood in its way should be forgotten. As they dared not tell the Muslim to forget his separatism, they pitched upon the docile Hindu for all their preachings. The first thing they preached was that our nationality could not be called Hindu, that even our land could not be called by its traditional name Hindustan, as that would have offended the Muslim. The name 'India' given by the British was accepted. Taking that name, the 'new nation' was called the 'Indian Nation'. And the Hindu was asked to rename himself 'Indian'.[16]

Thenceforward he comes to downright obscenity and abuse:

> The exhortation of the leaders did not stop at that. The Hindu was asked to ignore, even submit meekly to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims. In effect, he was told: Forget all that the Muslims have done in the past and all that they are now doing to you. If your worshipping in the temple, your taking out gods in procession in the streets irritates the Muslims, then don't do it. If they carry away your wives and daughters, let them. Do not obstruct them. That would be violence. To cite an instance, in those days, a Hindu

girl was abducted by a Muslim in NWFP and the problem was posed before the Central Assembly where our prominent leaders were present. A Muslim Congress leader lightly brushed aside the incident saying: 'After all boys are boys and girls and girls'. At that insulting remark not one of the Hindu leaders present there raised a voice of protest. None dared to ask why, if it was just a case of boys and girls, it always happened that the Muslim boys kidnapped only Hindu girls and not Muslim girls? On the other hand, they enjoyed it as a piece of humour!

Whenever the Muslims slaughtered cows to insult Hindu feelings, the Hindus were told that it was the religious right of Muslims and that, being tolerant to other religions, they should not object to it. Although there is not a word of sanction in Quran for cow-slaughter, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had given the Muslims a written assurance that on the advent of swaraj cow-slaughter would not be banned keeping in view their 'religious sentiments'.

Once a notable Hindu personality of those days, in a largely attended public meeting, declared: 'There is no swaraj without Hindu–Muslim unity and the simplest way in which this unity can be achieved is for all Hindus to become Muslims'! He did not even realise that then it would not be Hindu–Muslim unity but only Muslim unity as there would be no Hindus at all![17]

The reference to Jawaharlal is clearly made but to Gandhi it is by implication; it is however unmistakable for any discerning reader. And the peroration goes on so that a little further we read:

> In other words, the Hindu was told that he was imbecile, that he had no spirit, no stamina to stand on his own legs and fight for the independence of his motherland and all this had to be injected into him in the form of Muslim blood. What a shame, what a misfortune that our own leaders should have come forward to knock out the ancient and indomitable faith in ourselves and destroy our spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance, which is the very life-breath of a people! *Those who declared 'No swaraj without Hindu–Muslim unity' have thus perpetrated the greatest treason to our society. They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life-spirit of a great and ancient people.* To preach impotency to a society which gave rise to a Shivaji who, in the words of the great historian Jadunath Sarkar, 'proved to the whole world that the Hindu has drunk the elixir of immortality' and to break the self-confident and proud spirit of such a great and virile society has no parallel in the history of the world for sheer magnitude of its betrayal.[18]

And after this so-called RSS view of the historical process preceding Partition he makes the pronouncement: 'The direct result was that Hindus were defeated at the hands of Muslims in 1947.'[19]

These views were projected through the RSS media in the form of articles, stories, cartoons etc.

The RSS is not, according to its votaries, an active agent. In a sense it is true; the RSS never decides to do anything nor does it ever put on record any orders or instructions given to its members. If a deed finds approval of the public it comes forth to claim the credit, if it is otherwise it is promptly disavowed without as much as batting an eyelid.

In 1947–48 while the RSS men were being fed on the diet a specimen of which is given above, the leaders were keen to convince Gandhi that they were not anti-Muslim and were prepared to co–operate with his peace-keeping efforts. Golwalkar met Gandhi in New Delhi and tried to convince him that all the latter had heard about the RSS men killing Muslims was wrong and that their organization was 'for protecting Hinduism, not for killing Muslims'. Gandhi used to keep himself posted with the happenings in the city and yet as Pyarelal says, 'Gandhiji, with his boundless faith in human nature and in the redemptive power of truth, felt he must give everybody a chance to make good his bona fides. It was something that they did not glory in wrong doing.' Gandhi asked Golwalkar and his colleagues to issue a statement repudiating the allegations and condemning the loot and violence. They wanted to wriggle out by saying that it could be done on their behalf by Gandhi himself. He told them if what they said was sincerely meant the public should know it from their lips. They must have been convinced of the failure of their mission when during the meeting, in response to somebody's praise for the good work by the RSS at Wah refugee camp and showing discipline, courage and capacity for hard work, Gandhi remarked: 'But don't forget even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini.[20]

Then the old Hedgewar technique was used and they invited Gandhi to an RSS rally in the Bhangi colony of New Delhi. RSS leaders prefer to say that he had himself expressed a desire to visit the *shakha*. Whatever be the truth, the fact remains that they failed to change his attitude. What transpired at the rally is reported by Pyarelal thus:

> In welcoming Gandhiji to their rally, the leader described him as 'a great man that Hinduism has produced'. Gandhiji in his reply observed that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive. The beauty of Hinduism as he understood it was that it absorbed the best that was in all faiths. If Hindus believed that in India there was no place for non-Hindus on equal and honourable terms and Muslims, if they wanted to live in India, must be content with an inferior status, or if the Muslims thought that in Pakistan Hindus could live only as a subject race on the sufferance of the Muslims, it would mean an eclipse of Hindu-

ism and an eclipse of Islam. He was glad, therefore, he said, to have their assurance that their policy was not antagonism towards Islam. *He warned them that if the charge against them that their organisation was behind the killing of the Muslims was correct it would come to a bad end.* In the course of questions and answers that followed Gandhiji was asked whether Hinduism did not permit the killing of evil-doers. If not, how did he explain the exhortation by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita to destroy the Kauravas?

The reply to the first question, said Gandhiji, was both 'yes' and 'no'. One had to be an infallible judge as to who was the evil-doer before the question of killing could arise. In other words one had to be completely faultless before such a right could accrue to one. How could a sinner claim the right to judge or execute another sinner? As for the second question, granting that the right to punish the evil-doer was recognised by the Gita, it could be exercised by the properly constituted government only. Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru will be rendered powerless if you become judge and executioner in one. They are tried servants of the nation. Give them a chance to serve you. Do not sabotage their efforts by taking the law into your own hands.[21]

Gandhi was steadfast on his principles, which was frustrating for the RSS, and too shrewd to be taken in by the glib talk of the RSS men. They may have included Gandhi in the *Pratah-Smaran* (their morning prayer) but it certainly is not because any change of attitude towards him has come about. This was done in 1965 and a few years later the RSS members in the Delhi Municipal Corporation objected to a resolution referring to Gandhi as 'Father of the Nation'.

If the RSS can demonstrate a change in its basic attitude the charge of Gandhi's murder would get washed away. Otherwise it would stick, no matter what ritualistic cosmetics they employ. Such an opportunity was there in 1995–96 when a play based on Godse's explanation justifying the crime was sought to be staged. The Congress government in Maharashtra banned the play but the BJP government in neighbouring Gujarat allowed it. Later when the Shiv Sena–BJP alliance came to power in Maharashtra the play was revived in that state. There were protests against it. The RSS chief, Prof. Rajendra Singh alias Rajju Bhaiya commented that Godse was not wrong in opposing Gandhi, only his method was not correct.

Notes

[1] Morarji Desai, *Story of My Life*, p. 248.
[2] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Independence and After (1946–49)*, p. 17.
[3] *The Hindustan Times*, 3 February 1948.
[4] Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence (1945–50)*, Vol. 6, p. 55.
[5] P.N. Damodaran Nayar, Editor's Note to Curran, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.
[6] Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

[7] *Justice on Trial: Historic Document of Guruji–Government Correspondence*, pp. 26–28.
N.B. This letter also, incidentally, clarifies the misunderstanding created that the Sardar had invited them to join the Congress; the invitation is for rethinking and change of heart and then giving it a concrete shape by merger into the Congress. The same thing J.P. tried to accomplish later and failed.

[8] The said witness, R.N. Banerjee, was a member of the ICS and we have known, on unimpeachable authority of Shri K.R. Malkani, that there was an RSS *shakha* consisting of ICS members. Mr Banerjee could have been influenced by that *shakha*, if not its actual member.

[9] See *Secular Democracy*, October 1970.

[10] Gopal Godse, *May It Please Your Honour: Statement of Nathuram Godse*, p. 39.

[11] Referring to the organizational tour of Hedgewar in Maharashtra in 1932, Curran writes, 'One of his advisers on this tour was Nathuram Godse, who sixteen years later was to fire the pistol that killed Mahatma Gandhi. Godse had joined the RSS in 1930 winning prominence as a speaker and organiser; he left the Sangh in 1934 because Hedgewar refused to make the RSS a political organization' (*op. cit.*, pp. 18–19).

[12] The non-publication of Curran's study may be altogether innocent but it is intriguing. The Institute sponsored after this a study by Minoo R. Masani on the communist movement in modern India. The later work was promptly published as *The Communist Party of India* in 1954 by Derek Verschoyle in association with the Institute. *Why?*

[13] Godse, ibid., p. 46.

[14] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase,* p. 756.

[15] Ibid., p. 751.

[16] Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 149–50.

[17] Golwalkar, ibid., pp. 150–51.

[18] Ibid., pp. 151–52.

[19] Ibid., p. 152.

[20] Quoted by Pyarelal, *op.cit.*, p. 440.

[21] Ibid., pp. 440–41.

Excerpted from D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh*, Radhakrishna Prakashan, New Delhi. The author was formerly with the RSS.

An Open Letter to the RSS

R.K. ANAND

In an open letter to the RSS, parliamentarian R.K. Anand asks them to refute his conclusions based on hard facts that the RSS was implicated in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, that the RSS is a political, not a cultural body which, along with the Hindu Mahasabha, staunchly opposed the Quit India movement and whose activists have been indicted by several commissions of inquiry for their role in major communal riots.

Shri K.S. Sudershan
RSS *Sarsanghchalak*
Sanskriti Bhavan
D.B. Gupta Road, New Delhi

Shri Ram Madhav
RSS Spokesperson
Sanskriti Bhavan
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A lot of hue and cry is being raised and threat of legal action is being extended by the RSS for various allegations made against them that their members were involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

As a citizen of the country, after reading various periodicals, books and documents, I wish to form the following opinion:

(1) That the RSS and its workers/activists were involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi;
(2) The RSS is no longer a cultural organization, its activities are political in nature;
(3) The RSS and its activists have been involved in various riots committed in various parts of the country;
(4) The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha opposed the Quit India Movement which was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in August 1942.

My point–wise viewpoint and conclusions on the above are based on the following facts:

Killing of Mahatma Gandhi

a) Shyama Prasad Mookherjee was the prominent minister for Industry and Supply in the then Congress government in 1948 while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the minister of Home. Mookherjee was a leader and a member of the Hindu Mahasabha. Mookherjee was the person who later founded the Jana Sangh (now called Bharatiya Janata Party). In his reply dated July 18, 1948 to a letter from Mookherjee, Patel said:

> As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organisations, *but our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible.* There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy. The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of Government and the State. Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down. Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure.

In a conspiracy, a person may not be a direct killer, but the very fact that an atmosphere was created in the country which led to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi squarely comes within the mischief of conspiracy to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi.

b) It is a historical fact that on February 4, 1948, the RSS was banned as an unlawful organization by the Govt. of India, which ban was lifted on July 12, 1949. As mentioned above, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee was a cabinet colleague of Vallabhbhai Patel. He did not raise any protest on the banning of the RSS, nor did he resign from the ministry. He was convinced that the RSS and its activists created an atmosphere which led one of its activists to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi. On the other hand, Mookherjee, in his letter dated July 17, 1948, categorically denounced aggressive communalism. I quote below from his letter:

> Regarding the future, I do feel that the time has now come when leaders of all Hindu organisations should be contacted and efforts should be made to canalise their activities into lines which will best serve our national interest. Aggressive communalism which denies elementary rights to classes of Indian citizens merely on consideration of religion is certainly disastrous.

c) The Govt of India appointed a commission of inquiry under the

Commission of Inquiry Act headed by a senior Supreme Court judge, Justice Jeevan Lal Kapoor, to head its probe on the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

In Vol. V. Chapter 21 at page 303 in paragraphs 25.105 and 25.106 of the report, a finding was given which is as under:

> 25.105 No doubt, the Commission is viewing this matter twenty-one years after, when all the facts for and against both theories are before it and Mr Nagarvala was on a search for and collection of these facts and had to work out the clues and had to piece many bits of all kinds of information together like a jig-saw puzzle, but still on the following facts amongst others the proper conclusion, in the opinion of the Commission, was a conspiracy to murder and not a conspiracy to kidnap:
>
> (1) The information which had been given by Mr Morarji Desai to Mr Nagarvala;
> (2) The explosion of gun cotton slab at the prayer meeting;
> (3) The mention of the association of Savarkar, and Madanlal and Karkare having interviewed Savarkar before they left for Delhi;
> (4) The mention of a dump of arms guarded by a Maratha with a Sikh-like appearance.
>
> 25.106: All these facts taken together were destructive of any theory other than the conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group and . . ..

d) It is also a historical fact that while Nathuram Godse was the person who killed Mahatma Gandhi, he was not the only person involved in the conspiracy; there were several other accused persons including V.D. Savarkar. The question is who was Nathuram Godse – was he a member of the RSS, was he connected with the activities of the RSS, was he following the ideologies of the RSS?; how did the RSS come into being and who was the mentor of the RSS?

I have come across the following facts which would prove that Nathuram Godse was in the RSS and was a part and parcel of the RSS. Godse's mentor was Savarkar, even L.K. Advani admitted that his mentor was Savarkar and took steps to name an airport after Savarkar in 2002 and was instrumental in installing Savarkar's portrait in Parliament. Savarkar was implicated for conspiracy in the case leading to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Although he was acquitted, the evidence which was brought to light in the report of the Commission by Justice Kapoor indicated that Savarkar was involved in the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi. I have already mentioned a portion of the finding in para 25.105 and 25.106 referred to above.

It is an admitted historical fact that Nathuram Godse joined the RSS in 1930 and became a prominent speaker and organizer of the RSS. Godse accompanied Hedgewar (the then RSS chief) and Baburao Savarkar (brother of V.D. Savarkar) in an extended tour of western Maharashtra in 1932.

In 1931, Baburao who had founded the 'Tarun Hindu Sabha', a youth

wing of the Mahasabha, merged his organization with the RSS. Lacking trained cadres of its own, the Mahasabha, too, had started regarding the RSS as an extension of its politics in the sphere of the youth. The Delhi session of the Hindu Mahasabha (1932) passed a resolution commending the activities of the RSS and emphasizing the need to spread its network all over the country. In the same year, Mahasabha leader Bhai Permanand extended a special invitation to Hedgewar to attend the Karachi session of the Hindu Yuvak Parishad, and the RSS leader was thus able to establish contacts with youth groups in Sind and Punjab.

Baburao Savarkar brought the RSS in touch with Mahasabha activists in Banaras and Delhi and the great prestige of the Savarkar family among the upper castes of western Maharashtra enabled a major expansion of the RSS into that region. Pune developed into a kind of second headquarters for the RSS and an additional training camp was started there from 1935 along with the main Nagpur camp. V.D. Savarkar, after his release from jail in 1937, also helped to enhance RSS prestige in Maharashtra by demonstratively visiting and speaking at *shakha* meetings. In 1940, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, prominent Mahasabha leader, addressed a Lahore RSS *shakha* and declared that the organization was the one silver lining in the cloudy sky of India. Above all, it was the Mahasabha connection which enabled the RSS to start penetrating in Hindi-speaking northern India, today the principal base for itself and its affiliated organizations.

All the above facts point only to one direction, that there was no difference between the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. The Hindu Mahasabha had been in politics whereas the RSS was not directly in politics at that time. But the policies, ideologies of both were the same.

As to whether Nathuram Godse was in the RSS or not, who is the best person to disclose that historical fact? His brother Gopal Godse, who was also involved in the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi and who clearly revealed that all the brothers (Godse brothers) were in the RSS – Nathuram Godse, Dattatreya, Gopal Godse and Govind did not leave the RSS.

A reference is to be made to an article titled 'Godse–RSS link reflected Cowardice' (*Frontline*, January 28, 1994). The whole truth emerged 46 years later, in December 1993, with the publication of the book, *Why I assassinated Mahatma Gandhi* by the brother of Gandhi's assassin Nathuram. Gopal Godse, speaking in New Delhi on the occasion of the release, said that he and his brother had been active members of the RSS.

Godse also said: 'All the brothers were in the RSS. Nathuram, Dattatreya, myself and Govind. You can say we grew up in the RSS rather than in our home. It was like a family to us. . . Nathuram had become a *baudhik karyavah* (intellectual worker) in the RSS.'

When Godse was asked about Advani's claim that Nathuram had

nothing to do with the RSS, Godse replied: 'I have countered him, saying it is cowardice to say that. You can say that RSS did not pass a resolution, saying that, "go and assassinate Gandhi". But you do not disown him (Nathuram). The Hindu Mahasabha did not disown him. In 1944 Nathuram started doing Hindu Mahasabha work when he had been a *baudhik karyavah* in the RSS.'

Savarkar and Golwalkar shared a number of platforms. Photographs are available showing both of them sharing platforms in Pune in 1952.

All these aforesaid historical facts lead only to one conclusion: that Nathuram Godse and Savarkar were a part and parcel of the RSS; the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS were inter-linked in policies and ideologies and they were involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

RSS is a political, not cultural, organization

a) Shyama Prasad Mookherjee founded the Jana Sangh (now BJP). The RSS has categorically admitted that the BJP is its political wing. The RSS has for several years had a total grip over its political wing, i.e. BJP. The RSS has floated various organizations to propagate its ideology of Hindutva such as the VHP and Bajrang Dal. The word 'Hindutva' was coined by Savarkar who openly declared that Hindutva is not Hinduism; it meant Hindustan for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims. This was his two-nation theory which was further raised by RSS chief, Guru Golwalkar.

By the appointment of staunch RSS *pracharaks* in five states, the RSS has further tightened its grip over the BJP. This step has been taken by the RSS because the 'Five star culture' initiated by people like Arun Jaitley into the BJP is not liked by the parent body. The RSS installed its supreme leaders as governors/chief ministers, home minister and Prime Minister. The very fact that top leaders of the RSS have been installed in the BJP to capture power clearly establishes that the RSS is nothing but a political organization. In fact, the RSS acts as a springboard to fulfil the needs of the BJP.

b) It would be pertinent to mention here that in paragraphs No. 18 and 19 of the application submitted in the court of the district judge at Nagpur in connection with a case, Prof. Rajendra Singh clearly points out the mind of RSS. The relevant excerpt is as under:

> That the work of the RSS is neither religious nor charitable but its objects are cultural and patriotic as contra–distinguished from religious or charitable. It is akin to political purposes though RSS is not at present a political party inasmuch as the RSS constitution quoted above bars active political participation by RSS, as such, as a policy. . . Tomorrow the policy could be changed and RSS could participate in even day to day political activity as a political party because policy is not a permanent or irrevocable thing.

c) It is a historical fact that in the year 1979, during the Janata gov-

ernment rule under the leadership of Jai Prakash Narain, the question of dual membership arose, of the Jana Sangh and RSS. In a letter dated April 8, 1979, written by Jai Prakash Narain to the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai during the Janata regime in which BJP was a coalition partner, he clearly points to the direction that the RSS is a political organization. He stated:

> Some friends have repeatedly complained that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is making efforts to grab the leadership in the Government. Like other political parties the RSS is free to influence politics and it is doing so. But my only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics under the garb of a cultural organisation. I have advised the leaders of the RSS to merge themselves with organisations sympathetic to them or get affiliated with the Janata Party. But, they declined my advice on the plea that they have nothing to do with politics. I absolutely do not agree with this logic of the RSS. I still feel that the RSS should merge itself with the pro-Janata organisations.
>
> But if it is bent upon retaining its own distinct identity I would then repeat that it should include in it non-Hindus – Muslims, Christians, etc. I have always condemned Hindu nationalism of the RSS. For it is a dangerous doctrine and is against the ideal of composite Indian nationalism. In democracy every organisation has a right to propagate its philosophy or ideology – this is essence of democracy. But when it aspires to dominate politics, we would have to be careful to see whether such philosophy or ideology threatens the basic philosophy of Indian nationalism. I have no quarrel with the association of the RSS with the Janata Party. But it will have to give up its Hindu image and become completely secular. If it does not do so, it should keep its hands off politics, and snap its ties with every faction of the Janata Party.
>
> But as Prime Minister of India, it is your duty to make efforts to improve the RSS or make it a secular force. Its efforts to upset the secular basis of Indian nationalism and the Government should be opposed by all thinking individuals.
>
> Every time the RSS people assure me that they would internally improve. But I do not know what do they do after going from here. It is continuing like this for the last four years. After all there is a limit to everything.

RSS activists have been involved in riots in various parts of the country

a) Rajeshwar Dayal, an IAS officer who was home secretary in the year 1948 wrote a book titled, *A Life Of Our Times*. At pages 93 and 94, the book mentions serious allegations against the RSS and their involvement in riots in the year 1948:

> I must record an episode of a very grave nature when the procrastination

and indecision of the UP cabinet led to dire consequences. When communal tension was still at fever-pitch, the deputy inspector-general of police of the Western Range, a very seasoned and capable officer, B.B.L. Jaitley, arrived at my house in great secrecy. He was accompanied by two of his officers who brought with them two large steel trunks securely locked. When the trunks were opened, they revealed incontrovertible evidence of a dastardly conspiracy to create a communal holocaust throughout the western districts of the province. The trunks were crammed with blueprints of great accuracy and professionalism of every town and village in that vast area, prominently marking out the Muslim localities and habitations. There were also detailed instructions regarding access to the various locations, and other matters which amply revealed their sinister purport.

Greatly alarmed by those revelations, I immediately took the police party to the Premier's House. There, in a closed room, Jaitley gave a full report of his discovery, backed by all the evidence contained in the steel trunks. Timely raids conducted on the premises of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) had brought the massive conspiracy to light. The whole plot had been concerted under the direction and supervision of the Supremo of the organisation himself. Both Jaitley and I pressed for the immediate arrest of the prime accused, Shri Golwalkar, who was still in the area.

Pantji could not but accept the evidence of his eyes and ears and expressed deep concern. But instead of agreeing to the immediate arrest of the ring leader as we had hoped, and as Kidwai would have done, he asked for the matter to be placed for consideration by the cabinet at its next meeting. It was no doubt a matter of political delicacy as the roots of the RSS had gone deep into the body politic. There were also other political compulsions as RSS sympathisers, both covert and overt, were to be found in the Congress Party itself and even in the cabinet. It was no secret that the presiding officer of the Upper House, Atma Govind Kher, was himself an adherent and his sons were openly members of the RSS.

At the cabinet meeting there was the usual procrastination and much irrelevant talk. The fact that the police had unearthed a conspiracy which would have set the whole province in flames and that the officers concerned deserved warm commendation hardly seemed to figure in the discussion. What ultimately emerged was that a letter should be issued to Shri Golwalkar pointing out the contents and nature of the evidence which had been gathered and demanding an explanation thereof. At my insistence, such a letter if it were to be sent, should be issued by the Premier himself to carry greater weight. Pantji asked me to prepare a draft, which I did in imitation of his own characteristic style. The letter was to be delivered forthwith and two police officers were assigned for the purpose.

Golwalkar, however, had been tipped off and he was nowhere to be found

in the area. He was tracked down southwards but he managed to elude the couriers in pursuit. This infructuous chase continued from place to place and weeks passed.

Came January 30, 1948 when the Mahatma, that supreme apostle of peace, fell to a bullet fired by an RSS fanatic. The whole tragic episode left me sick at heart.

b) The Govt of India has appointed six commissions under the Commission of Inquiry Act in the last fifty years to enquire into the incidents leading to the riots in various parts of the country. These commissions were headed by senior Supreme Court and high court judges. Details of these are as under:

i) Justice Jagmohan Reddy Commission: Communal disturbance in Ahmedabad and other places of Gujarat in September 1969.
ii) Justice D.P. Madon: Bhiwandi and Jalgaon riots in 1970.
iii) Justice Vithayathil: Tellicherry riots in December 1971.
iv) Justice Jitender Narayan: Jamshedpur riots in December 1971.
v) Justice Venugopal Commission: Kanyakumari riots in 1982.
vi) Justice R.C. Sinha and Shamshul Hasan: Bhagalpur riots, 1989.

All the reports of the above commissions of inquiries are available in Parliament and you can confirm from the records that the findings given by the above commissions led to one conclusion – that a number of activists of the RSS have been found to be indulging in riots. They were creating an atmosphere of disharmony between the two communities in India.

c) I am in possession of a copy of the letter dated May 14, 1948 written by Dr Rajendra Prasad to Sardar Patel who headed the Constituent Assembly in the year 1948; the relevant portion of the letter is given below:

> There is a persistent rumour that June 15 is fixed as a date for something big happening and panic is growing. It is feared that RSS might do something on that date. I am told that RSS people have a plan of creating trouble. They have got a number of men dressed as Muslims and looking like Muslims who are to create trouble with the Hindus by attacking them and thus inciting the Hindus. Similarly there will be some Hindus among them who will attack the Muslims and thus incite the Muslims. The result of this kind of trouble amongst the Hindus and Muslims will be to create a conflagration.

d) Govind Sahai, a bureaucrat, in his book *The Genesis of RSS*, states:

> The worst stunt in this direction was that the writer of 'The Nazi Technique and RSS' should be prosecuted in a court of law, which a person in my position would naturally welcome. He would be failing in his duty who would avoid such an occasion of putting the facts of the case before the jury and having the unique pleasure of facing the verdict. Such a judgement and verdict would surely help all those to come to an independent judgement who

> want to know about the mystery of the RSS. The Sangh, however, I knew was too shrewd to commit any such foolish blunder. The talk of legal action, therefore, was a piece of their policy of creating stunts and causing a camouflage to cover their real intentions and designs. To say the least, the threat of legal action, if carried to its logical consequences, would have proved too dangerous a device for the RSS. Its leadership knew it so well.

All the facts referred to above clearly indicate that the RSS and its activists were found to be involved in fomenting and creating ill-will between various communities and were found to be involved as found in the reports of the commissions.

RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha opposed the Quit India Movement

Shyama Prasad Mookherjee (the founder of BJP) was the finance minister in the Bengal government headed by a member of the Muslim League, Fazal Haque. When Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan of 'Quit India', Mookherjee did not think fit to resign on August 9, 1942. On the contrary, he opposed the Quit India Movement in Bengal and made the following proposal:

> The question is how to combat this movement (Quit India) in Bengal? The administration of the province should be carried on in such a manner that inspite of the best efforts of the Congress, this movement will fail to take root in the province. It should be possible for us, especially responsible ministers, to be able to tell the public that the freedom for which the Congress has started the movement, already belongs to the representatives of the people. In some spheres, it might be limited during the emergency. Indians have to trust the British, not for the sake of Britain, not for any advantage that the British might gain, but for the maintenance of the defence and freedom of the province itself. You, as governor, will function as the constitutional head of the province and will be guided entirely on the advice of your ministers.

It is also a matter of history that the Hindu Mahasabha was in a coalition government with the Muslim League in Sind and the Sind Assembly passed a resolution endorsing the demand for the creation of Pakistan. Mookherjee and other Mahasabha leaders did not think fit to resign from the government. Mahasabha president Savarkar, mentor of L.K. Advani, issued a directive that they should stick to the government position and continue to perform their regular duties and not resign and, in fact, they went ahead and passed a resolution on August 31, 1942 asking all Mahasabhaites to remain at their jobs and oppose the Quit India Movement.

Looking into all the above historical facts and the correspondence/books, I would like to know from you why a man of common prudence should not come to the following conclusions:

i) That there was no difference between the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS especially with Mookherjee being a founder member of the Hindu Mahasabha who founded the Jana Sangh (now BJP);
ii) That Nathuram Godse, assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, was an RSS activist and he was a *baudhik karyavah* (intellectual worker) in the RSS and, admittedly, he was directly involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.
iii) That V.D. Savarkar was also a conspirator in the Mahatma Gandhi murder case. The acquittal of Savarkar and his indictment in the report of Justice Jeevan Lal Kapoor clearly points out his involvement in the crime of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi; he had also been taking active part in RSS organizations. It is only because of Savarkar that RSS organizations have made their base.
iv) That the facts referred to above clearly point only in one direction: that the RSS is not a cultural organization but a political organization.
v) That various facts referred to above clearly indicate that the RSS and its activists were involved in creating an atmosphere of riots in various parts of the country over the past fifty years as has been held by various commissions.
vi) That the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha opposed the Quit India Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in August 1942.

I would be grateful if you, being the head of the RSS organization, could present your point of view and reply to the public at large to the facts mentioned above. Hoping to receive an early reply.

R.K. Anand
August 2004

Annexures

Annexure A: Letter dated July 18, 1948 from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to Shyama Prasad Mookherjee.
Annexure B: Letter dated July 17, 1948 from Shyama Prasad Mookherjee to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
Annexure C: Kapoor Commission Report, Vol. V, Ch. 21, p. 303, paras 25.105 and 25.106.
Annexure D: Application submitted in the court of the district judge, Nagpur, by Prof. Rajendra Singh, paras 18 and 19.
Annexure E: Letter dated April 8, 1979 from Jai Prakash Narain to Morarji Desai.
Annexure F: *A Life of Our Times*, Rajeshwar Dayal, pp. 93–94.
Annexure G: Letter dated May 14, 1948 from Dr Rajendra Prasad to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
Annexure H: From *The Genesis of RSS*, Govind Sahai.

From Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's Correspondence

Letter from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Union Home Minister, to Guru Golwalkar, RSS Chief, 11 September 1948

Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi
11th Sept. 1948

Brother Sri Golwalkar,

Received your letter dated 11th August. Jawaharlal has also sent me your letter of the same date.

You are very well aware of my views on the RSS. I have expressed these thoughts at Jaipur in December last month, at Lucknow in January. The people had welcomed those views. I had hoped that your people also would accept them. But they appear to have no effect on the RSS persons, nor was there any change in their programmes. There can be no doubt that the RSS did service to the Hindu Society. In the areas where there was the need for help and organisation, the young men of the RSS protected women and children and strove much for their sake. No person of understanding could have a word of objection regarding that. But the objectionable part arose when they, burning with revenge, began attacking Mussalmans. Organising Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing.

Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people. *All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison and* enthuse *the Hindus and organise for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the valuable life of Gandhiji.* Even an iota of sympathy of the Government or of the people no more remained for the RSS. In fact the opposition grew. Opposition turned more severe, *when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death.* Under these condi-

tions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS.

Since then, over six months have elapsed. *We have hoped that after this lapse of time, with full and proper consideration the RSS persons would come to the right path. But from the reports that come to me, it is evident that attempts to put fresh life into their same old activities are afoot.* I once again ask you to give your thought to my Jaipur and Lucknow speeches and accept the path I had indicated for the RSS. I am quite certain that therein lies the good of the RSS and the country and moving in that path we can join hands in achieving the welfare of our country. Of course, you are aware that we are passing through delicate times. It is the duty of every one from the highest to the lowliest in this country to contribute his mite, in whatever way possible, to the service of the country. In this delicate hour there is no place for party conflicts and old quarrels. I thoroughly convinced that the RSS men can carry on their patriotic endeavour only by joining the Congress and not by keeping separate or by opposing. I am glad that you have been released. I hope that you will arrive at the proper decision after due consideration of what I have said above. With regard to restrictions imposed upon you I am in correspondence with the CP Government. I shall let you know after receiving their reply.

Yours
(Sd.) VALLABH BHAI PATEL

Note: This letter also, incidentally, clarifies the misunderstanding created that the Sardar had invited the RSS to join the Congress; the invitation is for rethinking and change of heart and then giving it a concrete shape by merger into the Congress. The same thing JP tried to accomplish later and failed.

From *Justice on Trial: Historic Document of Guruji–Government Correspondence*, pp. 26–28. The letter is quoted in full in D.R. Goyal's *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*. The entire text is rendered from the Hindi original.

Letter from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Union Home Minister, to Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, 18 July 1948: excerpt

. . . As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha . . . our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former (RSS) an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible.'

From *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 6, edited by Durga Das.

Blood for Blood

Excerpt from *Tamas*

BHISHAM SAHNI

Ranvir, the son of the president of the committee, followed Master Devbrat, the instructor of the gymnasium-cum-wrestling pit, the sound of Devbrat's boots echoing in the cobbled lane. The fifteen-year-old Ranvir was bursting with excitement. Today he would undergo the test and if he made it, he would be taken into the fold.

No lane of the city ran straight. A lane would run straight for a few yards and would then be joined by another tortuous lane. The houses flanking the lanes almost seemed to topple over one another so packed together were they. The sound of Devbrat's heavy boots was a familiar one in the lanes of the town.

Ranvir was still very young and his eyes had not lost their child-like curiosity. They even lacked that earnestness, so necessary when undergoing a supreme test. But in place of earnestness he had a sense of bravado, a blind determination to do or die at the behest of his mentor.

When Ranvir was very young, Master Devbrat would entertain him with stories of heroes of Indian history. There was an episode from Rana Pratap's life, for instance, when the cat had stolen his food, leaving him famished and making him acutely aware of his total helplessness. Ranvir would have visions of Chetak, Rana Pratap's favourite horse, as it went tramping over the hills overlooking the city. He would even see in his mind Shivaji watching a horde of approaching Muslims from the top of some hill. He also recalled the dramatic episode in Shivaji's life when he had caught a Muslim ruler in a fatal embrace. Masterji had taught Ranvir the basic principles of knot-tying and wall-climbing. He had explained the characteristics of the 'fire' and the 'rain' producing arrows depicted in the ancient Hindu epics.

Ranvir was told by Masterji that the Vedas were the repository of all knowledge and held the secret of making the bomb and flying machines. Masterji's talk of the marvels of *yogic* power had held Ranvir spellbound. 'One having *yogic* power can achieve the impossible,' Masterji would repeatedly impress upon Ranvir.

'You know the story of that *yogi*, don't you?' he would ask his pupil, and then repeat a story he had often narrated. 'A *yogi* had gone into a trance at the foot of the Himalayas. He achieved great occult powers. One day, when he had gone into meditation, a Muslim, an unclean man, came there with the mischievous intention of disrupting his meditation. You know these unclean people. They don't bathe, nor do they wash their hands after shitting. They have no compunction in sharing each other's spittled food. This 'unclean' person stood there glaring at the *sadhu*. As his polluted shadow fell over the *sadhu*, he opened his eyes. A gleam shot out of his eyes and singed the polluted man to death.'

These 'unclean' people would often revolve before Ranvir's eyes. In his neighbourhood, the cobbler who sat by the roadside, mending shoes, was said to be an 'unclean' man. So was the *tonga* driver who lived in front of their house. Hamid, who studied with him at school in the same class, was also 'unclean'. All the members of the family living next door were also considered to be 'unclean' and polluted. It must be some such person who had gone to the foot of the Himalayas to disrupt the *sadhu*'s meditation. Today, out of the eight boys he instructed, Master Devbrat had singled out Ranvir for the test. The boys were scared of Masterji. He wore khaki shorts and heavy black boots and spoke in a voice like thunder. His wrath was unpredictable and could fall on anybody without warning. The test which Ranvir was to undergo was secret and esoteric; only the initiates knew what it was.

The lanes looked desolate. At one place Ranvir felt as if they were walking along a thick web of darkness. As they drew nearer they discovered that the wall of a house had crumbled down and the darkness was seeping out of its debris.

Suddenly Devbrat stopped in his tracks. Although the desolate look of the lane had given Ranvir an eerie feeling, it had not been able to curb his exuberance. There was a narrow door framed against a long wall. Devbrat pushed it open. They stepped into a big courtyard at the end of which they saw the door of a narrow room across which hung a tarpaulin curtain. In the left corner of the courtyard lay two big heaps of rubble. The place looked deserted.

Walking across the courtyard, Master Devbrat pounded on the door. Ranvir heard the sound of coughing, followed by the shuffling of feet.

'It's I, Devbrat.'

The door was flung open. The old Gorkha *chowkidar* of the school stood in the door, peering at the visitors. He folded his hands in salutation and bowed his head.

It was dark inside the room. To one side lay a *charpoy* covered with a dirty bedsheet. A *lathi* stood against the right wall and by its side a *chelum* lay upside down. Over a wooden peg hung the *chowkidar*'s woollen overcoat and a long sword sheathed in a black scabbard.

Ranvir heard the crackling of hens and turned to look. About half-a-dozen white hens lay tied in a big basket in a corner of the room.

Holding Ranvir by the arm Master Devbrat led him into another courtyard, much smaller than the first and abruptly ending against the high wall of a neighbouring house. The Gorkha *chowkidar* followed them holding a hen in one hand and a knife in the other.

'Ranvir, kill the hen,' Master Devbrat said. The *chowkidar* handed Devbrat the knife. 'Before you're initiated into our fold you must prove that you possess a stout heart.'

Devbrat pushed Ranvir forward. 'An Aryan youth must be strong in faith, resolute at heart, and determined in action. Take the knife and go and sit there!' He gave Ranvir another shove forward.

Ranvir felt the place had suddenly turned sinister. He saw feathers of hens lying scattered all over. Near some rubble rested a slab of stone turned black with blood.

'Sit down and put one leg of the hen under your right foot.' Devbrat pressed the hen's wings and twisted one wing under the other.

The hen cackled furiously. But its wings having been firmly tied together it could only struggle futilely. It did this for a while then lay still.

'Hold it!' Master Devbrat sat down by Ranvir's side. 'Go ahead. Let the knife do its job!'

Sweat broke out on Ranvir's forehead and his face turned pale. Master Devbrat knew that the boy was feeling queasy.

'Ranvir!' he cried and slapped him hard on his cheek. Ranvir fell down in a heap on the ground. He felt like crying. The Gorkha standing behind him, watched him, a glitter of excitement in his eyes. Ranvir was still feeling unequal to the task but the slap seemed to have driven away his nausea.

'Get up, Ranvir!' Master Devbrat cried.

Ranvir slowly rose to his feet and looked at his mentor with heavy, dazed eyes.

'There's nothing difficult about it,' Master Devbrat said. 'Watch, I'll show you how.'

He pressed one of the hen's feet under his boot. The bird's eyes became glazed and then slowly closed. He held the hen's neck in his right hand and slit it. Blood spurted from the neck, some drops falling on Devbrat's hand. But he did not let the hen go even though its head had been cut off. He firmly held the windpipe down till it turned white. The hen's headless body kept quivering and then became still and its wings drenched with blood became limp. All that Ranvir saw was a handful of white feathers spattered with blood lying before him. Master Devbrat flung the remains of the dead bird to one side and got up.

'Bring another hen!' he told the Gorkha.

As he turned towards Ranvir, he saw that he had vomited on the ground

and was sitting there, holding his head between his hands, and breathing heavily. Master Devbrat felt like slapping him again but he controlled himself and just stood there watching him in disgust.

'I'm going to give you one more chance,' he said at last. 'A youth who can't kill a hen – how can one expect him to deal with an enemy?'

Soon Ranvir's breathing became normal and his stomach, which had knotted gradually, loosened up.

I'll give you five more minutes,' Devbrat said. 'If you fail to kill the hen this time it's all over with you. No initiation, no nothing.' He turned on his heel and walked out of the courtyard.

When he returned after five minutes, he saw a hen writhing under the wall, drops of blood flying from it in all directions, Ranvir was sitting by the side of the bird, his right arm held between his knees. Devbrat guessed how things must have gone. While Ranvir was struggling with the hen, it must have pecked at his hand and he had only succeeded in wounding the bird instead of killing it outright.

Writhing in agony the bird kept jumping in the air and falling heavily on the ground, leaving more and more blood stains on the ground. Blood fountained from its neck.

'Get up, Ranvir!' Master Devbrat patted him on his back. Ranvir slowly rose to his feet. He had succeeded in the test.

'*Shabash*!' Master Devbrat said. 'You've determination, you have will power. Though your arm still lacks strength, you've made the grade and won your reward.' He bent to the ground and dipping his finger in the blood spattered on the stone slab, made a blood mark on Ranvir's forehead.

From Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas* (*Darkness*), translated from the Hindi by Jai Ratan.

The Last Hours of Mahatma Gandhi

STEPHEN MURPHY

Punctually at 3.30 am on Friday, 30 January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi awoke to greet the last morning he would ever see.

He was in the tense atmosphere of Delhi, staying in a ground-floor guest room of Birla house, the mansion of industrialist and benefactor G.D. Birla located in Albuquerque Road. Gandhi had arrived in the strife-torn capital of newly independent India on 9 September 1947 from Calcutta, where he had performed a miracle of peace-making. By 30 January almost four months had passed since his 78th, and last, birthday. It was 12 days since the successful end of his fast to bring about a reunion of hearts in Delhi. But 10 days before, there had been an aborted attempt on his life during the evening prayer meeting at Birla House. With the situation in Delhi having stabilized, Gandhi was again looking to the future, but his life was in grave danger – and he knew it.

The Mahatma's last day would be as methodical and crowded as any other. Upon getting up from his wooden plank, he roused the other members of his party. They included attendants Brij Krishna Chandiwala and Manu and Abha, his grand-nieces. His physician, Dr Sushila Nayar, who was normally with him, was away in Pakistan. He brushed his teeth with a twig like any ordinary Indian.

At 3.45 am prayers were held on the same cold verandah where the party had slept. With Sushila away, Manu led the Bhagvad Gita recitation. They recited the first and second *shlokas*. Another female member had failed to rise in time for prayers. This disturbed Gandhi. He mused whether she should leave him, and concluded by saying, 'I do not like these signs. I hope God does not keep me here very long to witness these things.' When Manu asked Gandhi which prayer she should chant for him, Gandhi chose a favourite Gujarati hymn. The song begins, 'Whether weary or unweary, O man, do not tarry, stop not, your struggle if single-handed – continue, and do not tarry!'

After prayers, leaning on his 'walking sticks', Manu and Abha, the old man moved slowly into the inner room where Manu covered his legs with a warm blanket. It was still dark outside as Gandhi began his day's work. He

corrected the draft of his proposal for a new Congress constitution written the previous night. This document was to become known as his Last Will and Testament to the nation. At 4.45 he drank a glass of lemon, honey and hot water, and an hour later, his daily glass of orange juice. While working, because of weakness caused by the fast, he became tired and allowed himself a sleep.

Waking after only half an hour, Gandhi asked for his correspondence file. The previous day he had written a letter to Kishorlal Mashruwala. One of two matters the letter discussed was a tentative plan for Gandhi to soon leave Delhi and go to Sevagram. The letter had been mislaid, by Manu, and not posted. But it was found and Gandhi gave it to be posted, the last of many thousands. Manu had also wished to convey a message to Mashruwala, who had recently left Gandhi's service. She asked Gandhi whether they were returning to Sevagram on 2 February in which case they would be seeing Mashruwala soon anyway. Gandhi replied, 'Who knows about the future? If we come to a decision regarding Sevagram, I shall announce it at the evening prayer meeting. It will then be relayed on the radio at night.'

Also a consequence of his fast, Gandhi suffered from a bad cough. To treat it he would take palm-jaggery lozenges with powdered cloves. But by this morning the clove powder was finished. Instead of joining him in his morning walk, a stroll up and down the room, Manu sat down to prepare some more. 'I shall join you presently,' she said to Gandhi. 'Otherwise there will be nothing at hand at night when it is needed.' But always focusing on the here-and-now, Gandhi replied, 'Who knows what is going to happen before nightfall or even whether I shall be alive. If at night I am still alive you can easily prepare some then.' Manu, although well aware of Gandhi's principled stance against modern medicines, could not refrain from offering him penicillin lozenges instead. Unyielding, Gandhi asked her how she could offer him such things when his faith was in *Ramanama* and prayer.

The Mahatma's first appointment for the day was at 7 am, with Rajen Nehru who was going to America. Gandhi spoke with her while taking his morning constitutional in the room. He had not yet regained enough strength for his customary long walk in the open air.

Next Gandhi was to have a massage. Passing through his secretary Pyarelal's room, Gandhi handed Pyarelal his draft submission for the new Congress constitution, written for the forthcoming Congress Working Committee meeting. Gandhi asked him to go through it carefully. 'Fill any gaps that you may find in my thinking,' he instructed. 'I have prepared it under heavy strain.' Brij Krishna gave Gandhi the half-hour massage in a room adjacent to his sitting room. Two electric heaters were needed to warm the chilly air. While laying on the table Gandhi digested the morning newspapers.

After the massage Gandhi asked Pyarelal whether he had finished the revision. Gandhi also requested him to write a note on how, in the light of his

work in Noakhali, he believed an impending rice crisis in Madras province could be handled. Manu then gave Gandhi his bath. During this he asked her whether she was doing the hand exercises he had prescribed. Manu told him that she did not like the exercises, then listened to a long but gentle rebuke from her master, who told her of the responsibility he had taken for her health and moral development.

After the bath Manu weighed the little man (who was about five feet and five inches tall). He was 109 1/2 pounds. He had regained two-and-a-half pounds since ending his fast. His strength was returning. Pyarelal thought he looked refreshed after his bath. The strain of the previous night had disappeared. When someone told Gandhi that a woman member of Sevagram Ashram had missed her train that morning because there had been no conveyance for the several mile ride to Wardha station, he asked in all seriousness, 'Why did she not walk to the station?' Then Gandhi did his morning Bengali writing exercise. Today he wrote, 'Bhairab's home is in Naihati. Shaila is his eldest daughter. Today Shaila gets married to Kailash.'

By now it was 9.30, and time for Gandhi's morning meal. The meal included cooked vegetables, 12 ounces of goat's milk, four tomatoes, four oranges, carrot juice and a decoction of ginger, sour limes and aloes. While eating, Gandhi talked with Pyarelal about the draft Congress Constitution, to which Pyarelal had made some alterations. Pyarelal also reported on the outcome of a meeting the previous day with the leader of the extremist Hindu Mahasabha, Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Gandhi had sent Pyarelal to inform Dr Mookerjee of speeches of a particular Hindu Mahasabha worker inciting the assassination of some Congress leaders. Could not Dr Mookerjee stop these inflammatory speeches? Dr Mookerjee's reply was halting and unsatisfactory, reported Pyarelal to the Mahatma. Pyarelal observed Gandhi's brow darken as he repeated Dr Mookerjee's reply. Gandhi and Pyarelal then talked at length about the volatile situation at Noakhali. He told Pyarelal also of his plan to go to Pakistan. He asked Pyarelal to go back to Noakhali, but to wait until he had returned to Sevagram. Pyarelal was surprised at this request, for it was unusual for Gandhi to delay anyone returning to their post. Mid-morning also, an old associate from Gandhi's South African days, Rustom Sorabji, called in with his family.

Next, at about 10.30, Gandhi again slept. The soles of his feet were rubbed with ghee. At midday he awoke and drank a glass of hot water with honey. A little later he walked alone to the bathroom. It was the first time since his fast that he had walked unaided. 'Bapuji,' Manu called out to him, 'how strange you look, walking all alone!' Gandhi laughed and said, 'It's nice, isn't it? "Walk alone, Walk alone"!' These last words were Tagore's.

Morning had given way to afternoon. At about 12.30 Gandhi talked about the plan of a prominent local doctor to build a nursing home and orphan-

age. He wanted very much to help. Soon Gandhi was visited by a delegation of Delhi Muslim leaders who were calling daily. Communal tensions and the refugee crisis still darkened the atmosphere in the capital. Gandhi discussed with the leaders his wish to go to Wardha to see about his institutions there and attend a conference on 2 February. He would be back in Delhi by the 14th. He sought their permission to leave Delhi. 'I do expect to be back here by the 14th. But if Providence has decreed otherwise, that is a different matter. I am not, however, sure whether I shall be able to leave here even on the day after tomorrow. It is all in God's hands.' The leaders gave their permission for Gandhi to leave Delhi. He would announce his plans at the evening prayer meeting.

On his last day, Gandhi also spoke about his late beloved secretary Mahadev Desai. A biography of Mahadev's was to be written, but there was disagreement over financial terms. Gandhi expressed his frustration at this. Mahadev's diaries also needed to be edited and compiled. The ideal candidate, Narhari Parikh, was in poor health. The task, Gandhi decided, should fall to Chandrashanker Shukla. Mashruwala had been another candidate. The Mahatma also met with Sudhir Ghosh, who mentioned an apparent campaign in the British press to highlight a rift that had developed between Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel. Gandhi would raise the matter with Patel who was calling this afternoon, and with Nehru who, with Maulana Azad, was calling at 7 pm that evening.

Gandhi lay down in the afternoon January sunshine and had his abdominal mud pack. To shade his face he donned the peasant's bamboo hat he had brought from Noakhali. Kanu and Abha again pressed his feet. A journalist who was there asked Gandhi if information that he was leaving for Sevagram on 1 February was correct. 'Who says so?' Gandhi asked. 'The papers have it,' replied the journalist. 'Yes,' rejoined Gandhi, 'the papers have announced that Gandhi would be going on the 1st. But who that Gandhi is, I do not know.'

At about 1.30 pm, Brij Krishna read out to Gandhi a statement by Master Tara Singh which angrily advised the Mahatma to retire to the Himalayas. A similar attack by a refugee yesterday had shocked him, and this also left its mark. Gandhi then took a few ounces of carrot and lemon juice. Some blind and homeless refugees came to meet him. He gave instructions to Brij Krishna about them. Then the Allahabad Riot report was read to him.

Time was ebbing away. It was now mid-afternoon.

The usual daily round of interviews began at about 2.15 pm. Representatives from all of India – and beyond – sought an audience. Two Punjabis spoke about the Harijans of their province. Two Sindhis followed. A representative of Ceylon accompanied by his daughter asked Gandhi to give a message for Ceylon's independence day on 14 February. The girl obtained Gandhi's autograph, the last he was to give. At about 3 pm a professor who called in

told Gandhi that what he was preaching had been advocated in Buddha's time. At about 3.15 a French photographer presented him with an album of his photographs. He met a Punjabi delegation, and a Sikh delegation who asked him to suggest a president for a conference to be held in Delhi on 15 February. Gandhi suggested Congress president Rajendra Prasad, and added he would give a message himself.

Gandhi finished the last interview by 4 pm, when the Sardar was due to arrive. Gandhi rose from his sitting place and walked towards the bathroom. He asked Brij Krishna to arrange his railway journey to Wardha for the very next day, Saturday.

Gandhi was still in the bathroom when Patel and his daughter and secretary Mani arrived. Patel and Brij Krishna chatted for a few minutes. When Gandhi emerged he and Patel immediately fell into conversation. Gandhi told Patel that although earlier he had believed either Patel or Nehru would have to withdraw from Cabinet, he now agreed with Mountbatten, the new Governor General, that both were indispensable. He told Patel that he would make a statement to this effect at the prayer meeting, and he would say this to Nehru when he called that evening. He might even postpone his departure for Wardha if he felt there was any trouble between the two.

As Gandhi and Patel were speaking, two Kathiawad leaders came and told Manu they wished to see Gandhi. She enquired of Gandhi whether he would see them. Gandhi said in Patel's presence, 'Tell them that I will, but only after the prayer meeting, and that too if I am still living. We shall then talk things over.' Manu conveyed Gandhi's reply to the visitors and invited them to stay for the prayer meeting. Yet again, Gandhi had spoken of his possible imminent demise, and on this occasion in front of the man with prime responsibility for his safety. While Gandhi talked, Abha served him his meal. It included goat's milk, vegetable soup, oranges and carrot juice. Gandhi then asked for his *charkha*, which he plied lovingly for the last time.

For Gandhi this fateful Friday had been, more or less, a normal day. But for Nathuram Godse, a 37-year-old Hindu extremist, it was a momentous one from the second he awoke that morning in Old Delhi Railway Station's Retiring Room No. 6. For today was the day he was going to kill Mahatma Gandhi.

Early in the morning Godse was joined by fellow conspirators Narayan Apte and Vishnu Karkare. There were actually eight men involved in the plot to kill Gandhi. The three who would carry out their group's second assassination attempt spent the day working out the details of their planned murder and preparing for the awful deed. They would stand at the outer rim of the crowd toward the right as they faced the elevated platform on which Gandhi sat. Godse would shoot at Gandhi with a seven-chambered automatic pistol from this distance of about 35 feet. The other two would fend off anyone who tried to interfere. Godse had little experience with guns.

In mid-afternoon they left the railway station and went to Birla Temple. The other two prayed, but Godse did not. At 4.30, Godse, dressed in a newly bought khaki jacket – it would be a confrontation of khaki versus khadi – left the temple by tonga for Birla House. Five minutes later, Apte and Karkare took their own tonga.

Before five o'clock Godse reached Birla House, followed by Apte and Karkare. Since the failed assassination attempt on 20 January, Gandhi had acceded to the wishes of Patel and Nehru, and permitted about thirty police men, uniformed and plainclothes, to be stationed at various points around Birla House and its surrounds. Not to have agreed, Gandhi felt, would have only added to the burdens on the shoulders of the two leaders. But he drew the line at agreeing to the searching of those entering the grounds to attend his prayer meetings. Upon arrival the conspirators observed that the guard had been increased, and, with great relief, that no-one was being searched. All three entered the grounds without difficulty. They walked through the front entrance separately, as Gandhi and Patel at the rear of the mansion carried on their conversation.

It was 5 pm. Afternoon was fading to evening as the winter sun dipped low. Five o'clock was the appointed time for prayers. Gandhi disliked ever being late, especially for prayers. But he was not wearing his familiar Ingersoll pocket watch. These days others were his timekeepers. Manu and Abha saw the hour but dared not interrupt such an important conversation. At 5.10 they could wait no longer. Abha showed Gandhi his watch. But he was not distracted. Finally in desperation Mani intervened, and with Gandhi saying, 'I must now tear myself away', the talk ended.

Gandhi got up, put on his chappals and stepped through the side door out of the room into the twilight. He wore a shawl for warmth. As usual he lent gently on his two 'walking sticks'. Manu was on his right and Abha on his left. As usual Manu carried Gandhi's spittoon, spectacle case and rosary, and her notebook. Brij Krishna was behind them, together with some members of the Birla family and a few others, including the two Kathiawad visitors. Sushila Nayar, who normally walked in front of Gandhi, of course was not there. Nor, momentarily, was another attendant Gurbachan Singh, who with one or two other men was usually in front of Gandhi. Also absent from his position at Gandhi's side was A.N. Bhatia, the recently introduced plainclothes policeman. He had been assigned elsewhere that day, and no replacement had been appointed. The congregation had wondered why the punctual Gandhi was late, but now they could see him coming.

Thus Mahatma Gandhi set out on his final 200-yard journey, his final trek, his final march. He had come from Porbandar, to Rajkot, to the Inner Temple, to Bombay, to Durban, to Pietermaritzburg, to Johannesburg, to Phoenix Settlement, to Tolstoy Farm, to Champaran, to Sabarmati, to Yervada, to

Dandi, to Kingsley Hall, to St James's Palace, to Sevagram, to the Aga Khan Palace, to Noakhali, to Calcutta, to Delhi.

Today he did not walk as usual through the leafy arbour to the right side of the grounds. Being late, he took a short cut directly across the lawn to the steps leading to the terrace where prayers were held. Despite everything, his mood was light. He joked about the raw carrot Abha had served him that day. 'So you are serving me cattle fare!' he exclaimed. Abha replied that Ba, Gandhi's deceased wife, used to call it horse fare. Rejoined Gandhi as they hurried along, 'Is it not grand of me to relish what no-one else would care for?'

Abha and Manu teased Gandhi for neglecting his watch and his timekeepers both. 'It is your fault that I am 10 minutes late,' he responded. 'It is the duty of nurses to carry on their work even if God himself should be present there. If it is time to give medicine to a patient and you hesitate, the poor patient may die. I hate it if I am late for prayers even by a minute.'

With this the party had finished the first 170 yards of the journey and had reached the foot of the six curved steps that led onto the prayer ground. Gandhi always insisted on his party stopping all jokes and conversation before they entered the prayer ground. About now Gurbachan Singh caught up with the group, but did not move in front of Gandhi.

Around India and the world Gandhi's numberless friends and co-workers, old and new, were carrying on in the knowledge that Mahatma Gandhi lived still. Reverend John Haynes Holmes was at his home in New York, Mirabehn was at her ashram in the Himalayas, Mountbatten was at Government House, Nehru was at work in Delhi, Pyarelal was on his way to Birla House, the *Life* magazine photographer Margaret Bourke–White was just a few streets away, Patel was returning to his bungalow, and American journalist Vincent Sheean, who also had an appointment with Gandhi that evening, was only a few yards away on the Birla House terrace, himself part of the throng.

The hushed crowd was several hundred thick (including possibly about twenty plainclothes policemen). At the top of the steps Gandhi brought his palms together to greet the gathering. As usual, the people parted to make a passage for him to the wooden platform. Critically, today there was no one in front of Gandhi.

The supreme moment had come. Gandhi trod his final steps to eternity.

Through the parting, Godse saw Gandhi coming straight towards him. Godse then made an instant decision to completely change the plan, and to shoot Gandhi there and then from point-blank range. The Mahatma had taken just few paces from the steps. Godse elbowed his way through, parting from the other two, and approached the Mahatma with his palms joined. The tiny black Italian Beretta pistol was concealed between them.

He bowed low and said, 'Namaste, Gandhiji.' Gandhi joined his palms in acknowledgement. Manu thought Godse was going to kiss Gandhi's feet, a practice the Mahatma did not like. She motioned him away. 'Brother, Bapu is already late for prayers. Why are you bothering him?' she said. Gandhi had been expecting another attempt on his life. As this incident occurred, he might have understood . . . this was it.

No police intervened. Godse pushed Manu forcefully aside with his left hand, momentarily exposing the gun in his right. The items in her hands fell to the ground. For a few moments she continued arguing with the unknown assailant. But when the rosary dropped she bent down to pick it up. At this precise moment, a burst of deafening blasts ripped apart the peaceful atmosphere as Godse fired three bullets into Gandhi's abdomen and chest. As the third shot was fired Gandhi was still standing, his palms still joined. He was heard to gasp, 'He Ram, He Ram' (Oh God, Oh God). Then he slowly sank to the ground, palms joined still, possibly in a final ultimate act of *ahimsa*. Smoke filled the air. Confusion and panic reigned. The Mahatma was slumped on the ground, his head resting in the laps of both girls. His face turned pale, his white shawl of Australian wool was turning crimson with blood. Within seconds Mahatma Gandhi was dead. It was 5.17 pm.

Early that very morning, foreseeing the manner of his death, Gandhi had said to Manu, 'If someone fires bullets at me and I die without a groan and with God's name on my lips, then you should tell the world that here was a real Mahatma . . .' Gandhi had journeyed through a lifetime from Porbandar to Delhi. He had journeyed from a struggle against disenfranchisement in Natal, to one against British rule of India, to one for peace and justice in free India. He had journeyed from ordinary young man to Mahatma.

He had journeyed 'from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.'

His teachings had journeyed from India to the four corners of the world. Gandhi, the soldier of Truth, lay on the soft, moist earth, his body sacrificed. But Gandhi had never fought with the body but with the spirit, and that remained untouched.

'Teach Them a Lesson'

This has been going on for centuries now. Bharat's northern borders have always been assaulted by Islamic invaders. The cause for the long chain of evil deeds from Mohammed Bin Qasim to Nawaz Sharif were never that we had occupied their land, attacked or looted them. The only reason for the animosity has always been that Bharat has always been a peace-loving land, wealthy and loyal to its faith. This was intolerable for them. To loot our land of its wealth, to change our faith and to shatter our peace – that is why these attacks have always taken place.

These people have always come under the garb of looters and barbarians. From the story of Raja Dahir to squadron leader Ajay Ahuja and lieutenant Saurabh Kaliya, we can see the imprint of the same barbarism and inhumanity of these invaders. These invaders have always been ruthless and devious. They have always attacked us stealthily in the dark of the night.

They have always fought in the name of religion and given their deception the name of *jehad*. Even when they kill animals, they bleed it to a tortuous death and then call it *halaal*. Forget granting life to men, how can one expect from them even a dignified death? This is their way, this is their nature. And they never change their ways except when the hands of brave soldiers go for their jugular.

This inhuman lot can never forget 1971! Like bleating goats, 94,000 *jehadis* had then stood, their heads bowed in abject surrender before our brave soldiers. Had it been some Islamic country in our place, it would have beheaded the entire lot and dispatched 94,000 skulls to Islamabad. But true to our own civilised values and culture, we even fed milk to these 94,000 snakes. Fed on our generosity, they all returned, well fattened, to their homeland.

Look at them now! So 'brave' are they that when they encountered six of our soldiers on patrol, they would not fight them like men would. Instead, they were encircled, disarmed and then, crossing all limits of bestiality, tortured in such inhuman ways that even hearing or reading about it is intolerable. The

blood of every Indian is on the boil today. From Ladakh to Kanyakumari, the entire nation is raising only one demand – Revenge! Revenge!

The time has come again for India's Bheema to tear open the breasts of these infidels and purify the soiled tresses of Draupadi with blood. Pakistan will not listen just like that. We have a centuries-old debt to settle with this mindset. It is the same demon that has been throwing a challenge at Durga since the time of Mohammed Bin Qasim. Arise, Atal Behari! Who knows if fate has destined you to be the author of the final chapter of this long story.

For what have we manufactured bombs? For what have we exercised the nuclear option? The courageous give their enemy time to retreat. In the beginning, they even forgive. But if the perverse and incorrigible are bent on inviting his own death, the brave never disappoint them.

Just recall, with what crookedness and violence Pakistan has responded to our magnanimity since 1947. Enough is enough. To tolerate any more would be sheer cowardice. To teach them a lesson is the only *dharma* now.

Excerpted from an English translation of the editorial in the 20 June 1999 issue of the RSS mouthpiece *Panchjanya*.

The over 1000 years of our struggle with barbarians and religious bigots and their vandalism is written with the blood of martyrs who were subjected to the most inhuman torture unparalleled in history. The terrorist state of Pakistan is the continuation of that gory past.

Seshadri Chari, editor, in a signed article in *Organiser*, 20 June 1999.

The barbaric and cruel behaviour of Pakistan with Indian soldiers is a good indicator of their mindset and their 'civilisation'. The same mindset was at work during the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, his colleagues, too, were martyred in the same cruel way. Killing a person in the normal fashion is alien to their culture. By behaving with Indian soldiers today with the same bestiality as in case of Bhai Matidas, Bhai Satidas, Bhai Dayala etc., Pakistan clearly shows that even today its outlook is anything but humanitarian.

Rajendra Singh, RSS *sarsanghchalak* (chief), in *Organiser*, 20 June 1999.]

The Sangh's Bloody Trail

Extracts from Various Judicial Reports

Hindu communal organisations have always maintained that it is always the Muslims who start riots, forcing 'justifiable retaliatory acts by Hindus in self-defence'. But virtually every single officially appointed judicial commission to probe into the cause of riots in different parts of the country has found the RSS and other majoritarian communal outfits guilty. We reproduce some excerpts below.

Report of the Justice Jagmohan Reddy Commission of Inquiry investigating the Ahmedabad riots of 1969

'There was not only a failure of intelligence and culpable failure to suppress the outbreak of violence but (also) deliberate attempts to suppress the truth from the Commission, especially the active participation in the riots of some RSS and Jana Sangh leaders.'

Report of the Justice D.P. Madon Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad of 1970

'If the events surrounding the Shiv Jayanti procession in Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad are looked at more closely, the start of the riot was not with the simplistic reaction of the procession being attacked by a group of Muslims. Tension did not begin with the Shiv Jayanti celebrations of that year but began in 1964, the first year that the practice of publicly celebrating Shiv Jayanti had been started and had seen an annual build up in tensions since.

This practice did not only introduce the poison of communalism in Bhiwandi indirectly, but through the years, the organisers did not make any attempt to disguise the real motive and anti-Muslim slogans and provocative floats were part of the celebrations from the very beginning, the first year. In spite of police opposition, the organisers made every attempt to incite rioting by insisting on taking their procession through Muslim-dominated areas, throwing *gulal* (coloured powder) at mosques and shouting incendiary slogans like 'we will grind any one who opposes us into dust'.

In his report to his superiors, the SP, Thane district has stated, 'I found that a section of Hindu elements, particularly the RSS and some PSP men, were bent upon creating mischief. Their idea in accompanying the procession was not so much to pay respects to the Great Shivaji but to establish their right and, if possible, to provoke and humiliate Muslims.'

It was in 1970 that for the first time propaganda was carried on in villages exhorting villagers to participate in the Shiv Jayanti procession in Bhiwandi and this was the first year when villagers were mobilised to participate by the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal, an offshoot of the Jana Sangh, and the SS and the object of these organisations in bringing villagers to participate was 'to intimidate the Muslims', the participants carried *lathis* to which *bhagwa* (saffron) flags were tied, banners of the three organisations, the Jana Sangh, the RUM and the SS, were displayed by processionists.

The villagers shouted provocative, anti-Muslim slogans, behaved aggressively, threw *gulal* on the Moti Masjid at Bangad Galli and Hyderi mosque situated at the junction of Dargah Road and Sutar Galli aided by a passive police.'

Report of the Commission of Inquiry, Tellicherry Disturbance, 1971, Justice Joseph Vithyathil

'In Tellicherry the Hindus and Muslims were living as brothers for centuries. The 'Mopla riots' did not affect the cordial relationship that existed between the two communities in Tellicherry. It was only after the RSS and the Jana Sangh set up their units and began activities in Tellicherry that there came a change in the situation. Their anti-Muslim propaganda, its reaction on the Muslims who rallied round their communal organisation, the Muslim League, which championed their cause, and the communal tension that followed prepared the background for their disturbances.

According to the RSS, until the Muslims give up their separatist attitude and join the mainstream of Indian National Life there will be no communal harmony in this country. Guruji Golwalkar is said to have a very simple remedy for communal riots in India. He said: "Let Muslims look upon Rama as their hero and the communal problems will be over" (*Organiser*, June 20, 1971). That is what the rioters who attacked the house of Kunhammad asked him to do. "If you want to save your life you should go round the house three times repeating the words 'Rama, Rama'. Kunhammad did that. But you cannot expect the 70 million Muslims of India to do that as a condition for maintaining communal harmony in the country. This attitude of the RSS can only help to compel the Muslims to take shelter under their own communal organisation."'

Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Jamshedpur, April 1979

'The evidence of government officials shows that after the communal riots of 1964, the Ram Navmi Festival, like other festivals, became the occasion for greater vigilance and alertness for the law and order authorities; simultaneously, the number of Ram Navmi processions kept on increasing till it had risen to 79 in the year 1979.

In the run up to the communal build up before the elections prepared by the Intelligence Branch, Jamshedpur (dated March 23, 1979) there was special mention made to the Divisional Conference of the RSS scheduled to be held on March 31 and April 1 in which, among others, the RSS *sarsanghchalak* was to participate.

The dispute on the route of the procession (the administration after consideration had denied permission for the route to pass through Muslim areas) became sharp and agitated reactions from a group of persons calling themselves the "Sanyukt Bajrang Bali Akhara Samiti" who systematically distributed pamphlets to heighten communal feelings and had organisational links with the RSS. A call for the defiance of the authority and the administration when it refused permission for one of the routes led to a violent mob protesting and raising anti-Muslim slogans and thereafter an incendiary leaflet doing the rounds of Jamshedpur (issued on behalf of the "Sri Ramnavmi Kendriya Akhara Samity") that is nothing short of an attempt to rouse the sentiments of Hindus to a high pitch and to distort events and show some actions as attacks on Hindus that appear to be part of a design.

A survey had already established that all policemen, *havaldars*, home guards etc. were at heart ready to give support to them (Hindu communalist organisations). This not only shows the extent of the planning that had been going on, but also how the people in general were being assured of protection from punitive action by the police due to the alleged attitude of its subordinate formations.'

Justice Venugopal Commission of Inquiry into the Kanyakumari riots of 1982 (prolonged confrontation between Hindus and Christians)

'The RSS adopts a militant and aggressive attitude and sets itself up as the champion of what it considers to be the rights of Hindus against minorities. It has taken upon itself to teach the minorities their place and if they are not willing to learn their place to teach them a lesson. The RSS methodology for provoking communal violence is:

a) rousing communal feelings in the majority community by the propaganda that Christians are not loyal citizens of this country;
b) deepening the fear in the majority community by clever propaganda

that the population of the minorities is increasing and that of the Hindus is decreasing;

c) infiltrating into the administration and inducing the members of the civil and police services by adopting and developing communal attitudes;

d) training young people of the majority community in the use of weapons like daggers, swords and spears;

e) spreading rumours to widen the communal cleavage and deepen communal feelings by giving a communal colour to any trivial incident.'

From Teesta Setalvad, 'Who is to blame?', *Communalism Combat*, March 1998.

Responses to Gandhi's Assassination in Pakistan

Lahore, Feb 3, 1948

Grave challenge

The Delhi tragedy is not the isolated act of a political lunatic. The swift reactions that have followed it suggest wide underground ramifications. A challenge has been hurled at those who stand for a tolerant, democratic India; and if it succeeds, much more will have been lost than Gandhiji. It is for Pandit Nehru and those who think with him to meet this challenge of brute force. There is tangible evidence of India's conscience having been quickened by the tragedy. It is an irony of fate that the Muslim accusations of aggressive designs against RSS and allied organisations were always discredited as communal propaganda; and now that the mortal part of Gandhiji has succumbed to the assassin's bullet, it has dawned upon the saner elements in Indian life where the real danger to the body-politic lies. The lesson has been learnt at a tremendous cost. It will go to India's lasting discredit if Gandhiji's mission that cost him his life remains unaccomplished. Many searches and arrests have followed, and more will. Mere police action will not do. It will be necessary to stamp out the organisations that harbour designs for a revolution from the extreme right. Private armies and arms depots constitute a major threat to the State. Unless the top-men of militant sectional organisations are brought to book the dangers ahead will be incalculable. An Urdu Weekly of Delhi pointed out, not very long ago, that one had only to be inveterately and blatantly anti-Muslim in order to be acclaimed leader. This mentality will have to be suppressed. The Government will have to act without regard for the social position and political standing of the undesirable people. Gandhiji's murder is one of the darkest crimes in history and is comparable only to the crucifixion of Jesus. The Jews have not been forgiven, and their lot through the centuries has been little better than that of fugitives and vagabonds. It is our earnest hope and prayer that India may be spared the nemesis in which an entire people is sometimes landed by the doings of its misguided fanatics.

Editorial in *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 3 February 1948

Lahore, Jan 31, 1948

Glorious dust

Mahatma Gandhi is dead. The world has been deprived of the sight and sound of his frail body and aged voice—the body and voice that had in the last few months almost lost, for a large section of mankind, their personal and ephemeral character and become timeless symbols of compassionate love and fearless rectitude. As the man who first ploughed the arid wastes of Indian politics in the pre-nationalist period, the man who husbanded the seeds and saplings, only recently come to fruit and flower, of the freedom of Indian peoples, Gandhiji's name had passed into history long before the present and the greatest chapter in his life commenced. It was he, who lighted the path, for Muslims and Hindus alike, during our earlier travels towards the goal of national liberation. In later days our ways parted for reasons unnecessary to recount but the nature of our national objectives remained identical—the attainment of full and unfettered freedom for all the great peoples of the Indian subcontinent. During this period Gandhiji's politics were not our politics. We have differed often and sometimes violently with what he said and did. We have occasionally spoken in bitterness and written in anger. And now the wheel had come full circle and our paths converged again. For in these last momentous days Gandhi, the politician, gave place to the infinitely greater Gandhi, the man. He saw, as few of us can fail to see, that spread out underneath the present political contour of India and Pakistan is one vast immensity of unhappiness and fear and suffering and he strove as few of us have had the courage to strive to press back the dimensions of this suffering into circumscription and confine. He saw as few of us can fail to see that the present bloodshed and savagery are the beginnings of an unholy assault not only on our freedom newly-won, but also on our culture and civilisation inherited from our remote ancestors and he fought as few of us have had the courage to fight against this frenzied onslaught. And now he is gone. There have been great heroes in history who lived and fought and died to preserve their own people from dangers that threatened and from enemies lying in wait. It would be hard to name any who has fallen fighting his own people to preserve the honour of a people not his own. No greater sacrifice could be rendered by a member of one people to another and no greater tribute could be paid to the supremacy of fundamental human values as opposed to passing factional squabbles. And there could be no rebuttal more convincing of the popular prejudice that brands large sections of humanity as completely good or evil, as wholly moral or immoral. There is little hope for the world, however, if it has no other use for the noblest of deaths except to make it serve as a proof of so obvious a thesis. The greatest living Indian has fallen to the bullet of an unknown assassin. The most effective rational voice in the vast Indian Dominion has been brutally silenced. The best loved and most venerated political leader and moral evangelist of a near sub-continent, the idol of millions, has been publicly murdered. In India and Pakistan today every heart and every conscience should be searched to assess how far every heart and every conscience is answerable for this most fearful of tragedies. The poor idiot or maniac who committed the crime was certainly not the only man responsible. Who had fed his mind with such fell hate for the weary old man seeking to purge men's hearts with love? What nefarious potion made him flex his muscles to lay violent hands on the apostle of nonviolence? The answer is obvious. Every man who has thought and felt and spoken and acted as Gandhiji's assassin did, was his accomplice. Every violent word, deed and thought went into the composition of the mind that conceived and the arm that executed the terrible deed. Will this crime be the last? We do not know. Who can compute the amount of misery brought into the world since the day when heads began to roll and blood began to flow in the laughing countryside of the Punjab and on the time-hallowed pavements of Delhi and Ajmer!' One should have thought that the people of this subcontinent had reached by now the surfeit of sorrow and the limit of pain. One should have thought that, however great the grip of fanatics and reactionaries on the mainsprings of popular thought and action,, the common people would have, on account of the immeasurable losses and privations they have undergone, managed to disentangle themselves by now, from this deadly grip and be their normal selves. It has not been so. The people of India and indirectly the people of Pakistan, for he was trying to befriend both, have added to their other losses the most grievous loss of all—the loss of Gandhi. Let us hope that this most precious sacrifice to the demons of hate will placate them at last and the death of one will yet save the lives of millions for whom this life was given. Once the Hindus and Muslims of the undivided India mingled their blood, to fight for freedom under Gandhi's banner during the Khilafat days: let us hope they will now mingle their tears over his glorious dust, to retain their peaceful freedom under the independent flags of India and Pakistan.

Editorial by Faiz Ahmad Faiz in *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 31 January 1948

Lahore, Feb 2, 1948

Long live Gandhiji !

The British tradition of announcing the death of a king is: "The King is dead, long live the King!" Nearly 25 years ago, Mahatma Gandhi, writing a moving editorial on the late C. R. Das in his exquisite English captioned it as "Deshbandhu is dead, long live Deshbandhu!" If we have chosen such a title for our humble tribute to Gandhiji, it is because we are convinced, more than ever before, that very few indeed have lived in this degenerate century who could lay greater claim to immortality than this true servant of humanity and champion of the downtrodden. An agonising 48 hours, at the time of writing this article, has passed since Mahatma Gandhi left this mortal coil. The first impact of the shock is slowly spending itself out, and through the murky mist of mourning and grief a faint light of optimistic expectation that Gandhiji has not died in vain, is glowing. May be it is premature to draw such a conclusion now in terms of net result, but judging by the fact that the tragedy has profoundly stirred the world's conscience, we may be forgiven if we lay store by the innate goodness of man. At least we can tell at the top of our voice our suspicious friends in India that the passing away of Gandhiji is as grievous a blow to Pakistan as it is to India. We have observed distressed looks, seen moistened eyes and heard faltering voices in this vast sprawling city of Lahore to a degree to be seen to be believed. We have also seen spontaneous manifestations of grief on the part of our fellow-citizens in the shape of observance of a holiday and hartal. Let our friends in India take note—and we declare it with all the emphasis at our command—that we in Pakistan are human enough to respond to any gesture of goodwill, any token of friendliness and, last but not least, any call for co-operation from the other side of the border. Earlier we have indulged in a bit of optimism—and that for a very good reason. In India, sedulous and we believe sincere, heart-searching has been going on ever since the tragedy took place. The Government of India, too, seems to have at long last realised that they are sitting on top of a volcano. And above all, a small incident in Bombay in which a Hindu mob broke open the office of the Anti-Pakistan Front on Saturday and reduced its furnishings to smithereens is, we believe, realisation —though tragically belated—of the fact that Muslims are, after all, not the sinners—not to say the enemies of India. A large section of Hindus have discovered where their enemies reside and what political labels they flaunt. Not long ago, at Lucknow, India's Deputy Prime Minister, Sirdar Patel, while hauling Nationalist Muslims, who had assembled there a few days earlier, over the coals, sang a paen of praise for R. S. S. and the Hindu Mahasabha—the organisation which, alas, produced that worst criminal in history, Nathuram Vinayak Godse. Sirdar Patel pandered to their jingoistic vanity by asking the Congress to flirt with them. Paradoxical though it may seem, his chief, Pandit Nehru, while at Amritsar two days prior to the tragedy pricked the R. S. S. and Sabha bubbles in no uncertain manner by describing their politics as doing the greatest harm to the country. Again, just one day after the pledge given by representatives of different political organisations to Gandhiji for the promotion of communal amity which led him to break his fast, the well-known Hindu Mahasabha leaders Mr Despande and Prof Ramsingh, had the temerity to say that Muslims must be driven out of India. If the Government of India would have tried to take some of the conceit and "fire" out of these rabidly communal and militant leaders, may be Gandhiji would have lived to be 125. Instead of planting bombs and other weapons in innocent Muslims' houses in Delhi and other parts of India, had Mr Patel's intelligence department taken good care to protect the precious life of Mahatmaji, this vast subcontinent as indeed the world, would not have been smitten 'by this calamity'. It was far from us to recount these pre-tragedy happenings but we feel constrained to do so for the weighty reason that the destiny of fifty million Muslims is involved in India. We demand that the powers that be in India must treat them fairly and squarely. We would be less than human if we were to make even the least attempt to exploit Gandhiji's death in furtherance of our co-religionists' interests in India. But we are gratefully conscious of the fact that nothing would give greater pleasure to the soul of the illustrious dead than dispensation of justice and fair play to Indian Muslims, which he so passionately preached and for which he laid down his life. To these countless Muslims Mahatmaji would ever remain a symbol of hope and courage. Though he is dead, he will live through ageless time.

Editorial by Faiz Ahmad Faiz in *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 2 February 1948

The RSS and the Freedom Struggle

- The RSS kept totally aloof from the many anti-British movements of the 1940s: the individual Civil Disobedience of 1940–41, the Quit India struggle of 1942, Azad Hind Fauj, the 1945–46 upsurges around the INA trials and the Bombay Naval Mutiny.
- Yet the early and mid-1940s remained a period of rapid growth, with the number of *shakhas* doubling between 1940–42, and with 10,000 *swayamsevaks* being trained by 1945 in Officers Training Camps (set up in nearly every province).
- Similar to the Muslim League and the other Hindu communal groups, the RSS, too, benefitted from the fact that it was never a target of British wartime repression.
- But much more important was the way in which Hindu and Muslim communalism were feeding into each other, with the drive for Pakistan making more and more Hindus feel that the RSS was their best and perhaps only defender. Such sentiments spread particularly among the Hindus of the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab as well UP, where there was a highly articulate and aggressive Muslim leadership. A section of the Congress, too, had come to consider the RSS a useful bulwark against the increasing intransigence of the Muslim League.
- In Bengal, the other major Muslim-majority area, in contrast, the already powerful progressive and Left traditions were able to block larges scale RSS inroads. Taking the country as a whole, however, recruits were trooping into *shakhas*, and money, too, was pouring in.
- It was a time of prosperity for trading groups, with ample opportunities for war contracts and profiteering, and traders have always provided the major social bases for the RSS. Significant inroads seemed to have been made during these years into government services also.
- The communal holocaust of 1946–47, ushered in by Jinnah's call for direct action and the Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946, was regarded as its 'finest hour' by the RSS.

- Through active participation in riots, relief work in Hindu refugee camps and virulent propaganda, the RSS contributed vastly to the development of a massive fear psychosis among large sections of Hindus about the 'foreign' Muslims.
- Even a section of the Congress high command, particularly Vallabhbhai Patel, had become fairly sympathetic towards the RSS, although Nehru remained bitterly hostile. In the interviews they gave us, G.L. Sudarshan kept discreetly quiet about these bloodstained years; B.L. Sharma, however, boasted openly about his active role in the Punjab riots. (Authors of *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*).
- The onward march of the RSS was abruptly halted by the impact of the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.

Excerpt from Tapan Basu *et al.*, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993.

RSS Speak

Interview with Gopal Godse: Excerpts

ARVIND RAJAGOPAL

Were you a part of the RSS?

All the brothers were in the RSS. Nathuram, Dattatreya, myself and Govind. You can say we grew up in the RSS rather than in our home. It was like a family to us.

Nathuram stayed in the RSS? He did not leave it?

Nathuram had become a *baudhik karyavah* (intellectual worker) in the RSS. He has said in his statement that he left the RSS. He said it because Golwalkar and the RSS were in a lot of trouble after the murder of Gandhi. But he did not leave the RSS.

Advani recently said that Nathuram had nothing to do with the RSS.

I have countered him, saying it is cowardice to say that. You can say that RSS did not pass a resolution saying, 'Go and assassinate Gandhi.' But you do not disown him (Nathuram). The Hindu Mahasabha did not disown him. In 1944 Nathuram started doing Hindu Mahasabha work when he had been a *baudhik karyavah* in the RSS.

When was the plan to kill Gandhi made?

Nathuram had a teleprinter as editor of the *Hindu Rashtra*, a daily. On the teleprinter, he saw that Gandhi has decided to undertake a fast on the next day. (The fast was to demand that the amount of Rs 55 crores not be withheld from Pakistan, against the government's decision to withhold payment until Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir had been resolved. The Rs 55 crores was part of the settling of post-Partition accounts between India and Pakistan.) Immediately it must have struck Nathuram – now put a fullstop. So that was the turning point.

But there were many occasions on which people may have thought of killing Gandhi. In the refugee camps. That he is the person who brought us disaster, so why not kill him? It many times happens . . . that the clouds

gather in the skies and we assume that in the next fifteen minutes there will be rainfall – and a heavy one. But the things are otherwise. Winds blow, don't know from which side, and take away all the clouds. . . . So what is required for that rainfall? That particular atmosphere, the particular degree of temperature to be connected with the particles of water in the cloud. And then they take the shape of water to drop on the earth. . . . So there might have been conspiracies and conspiracies, and the wind might have come and blown them away. But when everything was just in order, this conspiracy proved to be fruitful – so far as the conspirators were concerned. Fruitful in the sense, materialized. Their aim was achieved.

What was your involvement with (V.D.) Savarkar?

No question – we were all taking him to be our guru, a political guru. We read all his writings. So if we say we have understood Savarkar to the fullest, it will be a folly on our part to ask him whether we should do it. A guru's blessings are required for a weak-hearted person. Supposing the guru ties your hands (saying) – 'You fools, don't do any such thing', and some third person of his own does it, can we say, 'Oh, we would also have done the same thing, but the guru tied our hands?' That would be shielding our own fear and defaming the guru.

What was Savarkar's response to the murder?

The same as that of the general leaders. 'I was aghast at the news of the communication which reached me here' and so on. That was his public response.

Many writers have argued that Gandhi was responsible for bringing Hindu culture into the national movement and thereby giving the movement a broader, more popular base. What do you think?

Had it really been the case, Gandhi should have helped our government to declare this a Hindu state. But he did not want it. And this story that Gandhi died saying '*He Ram*' is a fabrication of the Congress. He said no such thing. The story that Gandhi died saying '*He Ram*' is the first use of Ram by the Congress for political purposes.

One criticism some people have made of Gandhi is that his interpretation of Hinduism was 'effeminate', and that he did not emphasize the 'more manly, virile' aspect of Hinduism. What do you think about this criticism?

You see, this is very much an ambiguity. For instance, he sent telegrams to Roosevelt, Churchill, Hitler, all the warlords – to stop war. And when Pandit Nehru asked him, 'Shall I send the army to defend the place?', he said yes.

Why didn't he send troops with *charkhas*? What is the sense then? You only teach others – you don't adhere to your principles.

When Uma Bharati or Sadhvi Ritambhara says that 'we must be more aggressive', that Hindus have been cowards for too long, that ahimsa *is actually weakening the Hindus . . .*

I disagree. In my country I am never said to be aggressive. Let us take a case – I have been attacked by malaria. The doctor gives me some injections. The foreign attack of malaria has been diminished or wiped out. Should I say that I should be aggressive against malaria, that imposition of malaria is itself an aggression? So wiping it out can be a retaliation. In my country if I want to remove every germ of malaria from my body, I cannot be called aggressive.

In what ways do you find a continuity between the Hindu Mahasabha and the BJP?

All of them have to come to the way of a Hindu Rashtra. All of them. There is no alternative. There is going to be polarization as Hindus and Muslims mingle. And the stage will come like Bosnia.

There will be a civil war?

It is bound to be. And these people only will bring it. Because of the appeasement and infiltration of the Muslims – for the sake of the votes. The BJP is not bold enough to play the Hindu card straightforwardly. They are not. Whatever you do, you cannot count on Muslim votes. One time you are doing this Ayodhya Ram Mandir. And then you are begging votes from the Muslims. These things will not do.

What do you think of the cultural background of the people involved in the social reform and nationalist movements? Many of them seem to have come from the Chitpavan Brahmin community.

This Brahminical class – Peshwas – right from the top, you will find the revolutionaries – the link is all Brahminical. Mangal Pandey, for instance, the first hero of the War of Independence, was a Brahmin. Then you go to Maharashtra, Vasudev Balwant Phadke, who led a revolt and died after transportation to Aden in 1883. Then came the Chapekar brothers, who killed (Walter Charles) Rand (authoritarian chairman of the Plague Committee in Poona in 1897). Then Lokamanya Tilak was a Brahmin. Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Ranade . . .

How do you explain that?

They were the thinkers and with a feeling of sacrifice to do something

for the nation. So one who has integrity does it. Maharashtra was not directly affected by Partition and yet it was Maharashtra which had sympathy for the provinces that were cut and the atrocities that were going on. . . . Why should a Maharashtrian go to a place 2,000 miles away? It is called national integrity. This tradition has moved with that spirit, that idea behind it. These papers – you can call it yellow journalism – they use the name Peshwai to defame, to put them in the class of Brahmins and Brahminism. That is the tradition because they want to appease the so-called weaker sections, or Bahujan Samaj as they call it.

You do not see any validity in those distinctions?

As I explained, at the time of Partition, no person was spared. All were slaughtered. Whoever comes as a target of the Muslim dagger is the proved definition of Hindu. So we come together in the graveyard. But while alive, we say, 'No, I'm not a Hindu.' The Muslim determines who is a Hindu. It so happens – to give a simile, one who gets some ancestral property without any trouble for himself just becomes spendthrift, goes in for some vices, because he does not know the value of it. Hindudom has come to these people like that.

Which people?

All these people who criticize Hindutva. And, therefore, they do not know the value of it.

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Resurrecting Godse: The Hindutva Continuum

ARVIND RAJAGOPAL

The publicity given to the Nathuram Godse memorial meeting, held in Bombay on 17 November (1993), has been extremely embarrassing to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which would like to disown all connections with Mahatma Gandhi's killer. The meeting, unusually for this annual event, was widely reported, and saw several inflammatory speeches eulogizing Godse and vilifying Gandhiji. On 21 November, BJP president L.K. Advani issued a statement denying that his party had anything to do with the recent attempts to glorify Nathuram. 'Nathuram Godse was a bitter critic of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh', he said. 'His charge was that the RSS had made Hindus impotent. We have had nothing to do with Godse. The Congress is in the habit of reviving this allegation against us when it finds nothing else' (*The Times of India*, 22 November 1993).

In fact, Nathuram Godse was a life-long member of the RSS, attaining the position of *baudhik karyavah* (intellectual worker). His statement at the murder trial (originally published in 1977, in a volume entitled *May It Please Your Honour*) says, 'I am one of those volunteers who joined the Sangha in its initial stage' (p. 142). He says he left it to do more directly political work in the Hindu Mahasabha (he does not say when). But his brother Gopal Godse suggests that he never really left the RSS, and that the statement at his trial was meant to alleviate the pressure on the Sangh, which was banned following Gandhiji's murder. A leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, went on to found the Jana Sangh, forerunner of the BJP.

Mere membership does not, of course, mean responsibility: the BJP does not necessarily have to answer for the actions of each person ever associated with the Sangh Parivar. But in this case, the chickens have come home to roost. Gopal Godse reacts to Advani's statement angrily and calls it the response of a coward. The politics of *swayamsevaks* like the Godses does not differ too greatly from that of the RSS and the BJP today. The BJP's campaign slogan in the recent elections, '*Hum ne jo kaha, so kiye*' (What we said, we did), boast-

ing of an event that consumed thousands of lives, denotes an implacability of resolve at least equal to Nathuram's.

Meeting Gopal Godse himself is helpful in uncovering any affinities that might exist between his politics and that of the Sangh Parivar. He lives in the heart of old Pune, in Sadashiv Peth, in a new apartment building called Vinayak. His flat shares a landing with a bank, and, in that busy space, it is startling to see the names in Devanagari script in prominent red on the door: 'Shri Gopal Godse. Sow. Sunita Godse.'

He opens the door. Gandhiji's murderer, you think, but there he is, a tall, slightly bent man in pyjamas and an old yellow sleeveless sweater. You scan his appearance for signs of what might make him different. But, as in most scandals, one experiences the shock of banality on meeting its perpetrator. He looks, for all purposes, like any other Chitpavan Brahmin one sees in Sadashiv Peth – a frail old man, albeit with hooded eyes. He remains proud of his Chitpavan heritage. He smiles slightly and lowers his gaze – the half-conscious reaction, perhaps, to a lifetime of notoriety.

A large glass case dominates the drawing room decorations. It contains a small silver urn surrounded by photographs. In the urn are the ashes of Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte. The pictures are of them and of V.D. Savarkar. Just below the case is a porcelain plate with Savarkar's portrait. His motto, 'Hinduise all politics and militarise Hindudom', encircles the picture. Although 'honourably acquitted' of conspiring to kill Gandhi, Savarkar was nevertheless a close associate of Nathuram Godse. Gopal Godse's daughter, Asilata, has married Ashok Savarkar, son of Savarkar's younger brother Narayan. Both families are still close to the Hindu Mahasabha (the party Nathuram belonged to and Savarkar was president of for several years); Gopal Godse was until recently its general secretary.

He is eager to talk. 'Greedy to spread his message', as he puts it – to justify his brother's act, and to propagate the concept of Hindu Rashtra which, he feels, is the only answer to the country's political problems. He is polite and courteous; though his views may be offensive in the extreme, he tries not to let his manners impede the reception of his ideas. It is hard for most people to conceive of Gandhiji's killers as other than demented or demonic. This is obviously a matter very much on his own mind. He is constrained to refute the myth that Nathuram was a madman or a fanatic. 'You may disagree with his views, but you must first consider his arguments', Gopal says.

He rejects all existing political parties except the Hindu Mahasabha. Every other party, he says, is guilty of pandering to the Muslims and consequently endangering the nation. Similar criticisms of the BJP, however, are made by several within the RSS itself. Godse's views themselves have much in common with those of the BJP. India is nothing if not Hindu – this is the

theme he tirelessly stresses, in one variation after another. Muslims do not have their original place of worship within this country, and it is essential, in his view (derived from Savarkar), that one's place of birth is also one's holy land. Muslims can be loyal only to Pakistan; every Muslim in India is a Pakistani agent, he says. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) slogan, '*Babar ki santaan – jao Pakistan ya kabristan!*' (Children of Babar – go to Pakistan or else to the grave!) dramatizes this sentiment.

He has spent much time in the last few years studying texts on Hindu architecture. His object is to demonstrate that while Hinduism provided the *sanskriti*, or culture, of India, the Islamic influence was nothing but *vikruti*, or destruction. The Taj Mahal was a Siva temple – this is proven by the fact that Siva temples have four doorways. The Taj, like many other Mughal structures of its kind, has four doorways. All those other Mughal structures, therefore, are also Siva temples, Godse argues. The Qutb Minar is a particular preoccupation of his – another Hindu structure usurped and defaced by invaders, and originally called the Dwija Sthamba, he maintains. He has even convinced an M.Phil. student to do his thesis on the subject. The Muslims did not build a single structure in India, he asserts, astonishingly. All they did was to efface Hindu icons and ornamentation from existing structures, and often incompletely. He has memorized many Sanskrit and Arabic verses for dramatic effect, and urges visitors to test his memory. He recites the verses, which few visitors understand in any case, in support of his arguments. He cites Sitaram Goel, author of *What Happened to the Hindu Temples?* which gave the rhetorical foundation to the VHP's long list of mosques to be demolished. Most of his ideas with respect to architecture and culture, however, derive from P.N. Oak, the ex-Indian National Army volunteer and 'scholar' who claims all of world culture for Hinduism's province. Rome was named after Ram, Christianity is actually Krishna-*niti*, and so on; an entire history is swiftly fabricated by manipulating the syllables of proper nouns.

What unites these ideas is an insistence on the unity of history, geography, culture, religion and nation, extending to every object *or individual within the region*. He follows fearlessly the implications of this monistic political theology. No displacements, no articulations of different but related parts are allowed; every artefact and every text forever reduplicates the immutable truth that is 'Hindu'. Just what this truth is, is in itself less important than its endless proliferation under the same category. All his theorizing is then ultimately a process of renaming. The etymology of 'category' is *categorein*, to accuse; 'Hindu' functions not as a neutral name but in sharp opposition to its 'others', notably Muslims. For Godse, Hindus and Muslims can never be part of the same nation without disastrous results, Islam is an inherently fanatic, aggressive religion, and its adherents will always take advantage of the

tolerance and catholicity of Hindus. The opposition to Muslims only serves to render Hindus more like their demonic 'others', the Muslims, but that seems secondary to the imperative of survival.

When questioned on the need for aggression, he demonstrates a deft ability at sophistry. Carrying through the assumption of the unity of the individual, religion and nation, he declares the concept of aggression to be inapplicable in the case of action against Muslims. 'I cannot be violent in my own country', he says, comparing Muslims to a 'foreign attack' of virus.

Godse's ideas are in a continuum with Hindu right-wing thought today. They draw from and reflect its characteristics. They have the trait of candour, of fleshing out the implications of what an Advani or a Vajpayee would be more likely to obscure with assurances of moderation and democratic process that are routinely violated. They have a great deal in common with, for instance, Uma Bharati, an 'extremist' who was, however, always seen at the side of the moderate Advani after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Muslims are the main target of her wrath: 'Muslims are like Sudras – dirty, filthy people', she said in a conversation with this writer last year. 'We must tyrannize them. If any one of them creates any kind of fuss, they should simply be killed.' Even her reassurances were alarming: 'I am not a Hitler,' she said, 'I am not going to build gas chambers.'

Others, like journalist Arun Shourie, concentrate their attacks on the enemy within, namely pseudo-secularists. In a 25 November lecture in Pune under the auspices of the Lok Swaraj Andolan (to promote his new book, *A Secular Agenda*), Shourie reminded his audience that Abraham Lincoln had fought a civil war to keep his country from splitting into two. The war killed two per cent of the country's population, but no one questioned the necessity of the war – it was redeemed by the nobility of its purpose. Two per cent of India's population amounts to eighteen million, but Shourie made it clear that India too should be prepared for such a war.

If you turn to M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS leader, the confirmation of a continuity with Godse's views is even more emphatic:

> When we say 'This is the Hindu Nation', there are some who immediately come up with the question, 'What about the Muslims and Christians. . .?' They are born in this land, no doubt. But are they true to their salt? . . . Do they feel a duty to serve her? No! . . . They look to some foreign lands as their holy places. . . . They have cut off their ancestral moorings of this land (*sic*) and mentally merged themselves with the aggressors. They still think that they have come here only to conquer and establish their kingdoms. So we see that it is not merely a case of change of faith, but a change even in national identity. What else is it, if not treason, to join the camp of the enemy leaving their mother-nation in the lurch? (*Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 166–67)

Every Muslim, for Golwalkar as for Godse, is a foreign agent with little to do but engage in anti-national activities, usually of a violent kind:

> The Muslims are busy hatching a dangerous plot, piling up arms and mobilizing their men and probably biding their time to strike from within when Pakistan decides upon an armed conflict with our country. . . . Not that our leaders do not know it. The secret intelligence reports reach them all right. But it seems they have in view only elections. Elections means vote-catching, which means appeasing certain sections. . . . And the Muslims are one such solid bloc. Therein lies the root of all this appeasement and consequent disastrous effects. (*Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 239–40).

Compare this with Gopal Godse:

> They make bomb blasts in Bombay in the name of the Koran. They will continue because the Koran is very clear. They want to Islamize their complete world. And the secularism is the most fertile ground for them to do it. . . . Outside, what happens today, for Haj, a Muslim who is a smuggler goes there. And a Pakistani minister goes there. They join there together under the name of Islam. They dictate what is to be done in India. . . . So all conspiracies go on in the name of Islam. And we allow it. (Personal interview)

The true Hindu patriot has two enemies: the Muslim and the 'secular' (nowadays pseudo-secular) government. The Muslim's danger is well known and unambivalent, whereas that of the secularists is much less so. Parading itself as tolerant and pluralistic, the secular government is actually calculating and selfish, and will lead the nation to disaster. Only in Hindutva is such narrow selfishness overcome, as individual identity merges with the nation. In these ideas, Godse and the RSS 'guru', Golwalkar, are unanimous.

It must be conceded that the BJP and the RSS are more sensitive to public opinion, to the practicality of actually getting something done, as opposed to landing up behind bars or in the gallows after having made a 'statement' of some kind. Especially with the BJP, a party primarily seeking power, the ideas its leaders express are often serviceable means to an end rather than deep convictions. In this respect, the saying goes, BJP minus RSS equals Congress (a witticism that says as much about the Congress as about the BJP). It is the RSS which is the backbone of the Hindutva party and which makes the BJP different from other parties.

The habit of seeing dangerous conspiracies everywhere, of calling for rooting out a scourge that threatens the nation, is itself sign of a paranoid mentality that in the US, for instance, was called McCarthyism. Perhaps we should cease calling a paranoid and violent politics by its own preferred name of 'Hindutva', and thereby deny it any respectable cover. Advani's disavowal of Nathuram Godse's connection with the RSS flies in the face of the well-

documented connections between them and the essential similarity of their ideas, as suggested by Nathuram's published statements, as well as Gopal Godse's own words. The Janata Dal slogan against the BJP in the recent elections summed it up: '*Muh me Ram aur dil me Nathuram*' (Ram on their lips and Nathuram in their hearts).

First published in *Frontline*, 28 January 1994.

Interview with Rajju Bhaiya: Excerpts

Do you approve of the BJP forging an alliance with Jayalalitha who is facing criminal charges?

The BJP might have alliances but each party has a different manifesto and they are fighting on their own agenda. It's only a question of seat adjustments to make sure that their votes don't get divided and the third party doesn't win. And the BJP has not done anything which we don't approve of.

Despite your assertion that Kashi and Mathura are very much on the agenda of the RSS, the BJP has always shied away from the issue. Why do the different organizations of the Sangh speak different languages?

Being a political party, the BJP thinks and talks about the immediate issues. They need not think about the questions of the future. At present we cannot do anything about Ram Janmabhoomi because the land surrounding it has been taken over by the government.

Your ideal of good governance?

By good governance I mean our MLAs and MPs should be honest. I feel that had the government followed the Indian culture, we would have accomplished our dream.

But didn't Kalyan Singh induct people with criminal links in his cabinet?

He did it to show that the BJP was not an untouchable. To show that you can't make a fool of us every time and topple our governments. For abnormal times we have to adopt abnormal policies.

The BJP is ruling in at least four states. Are you satisfied with their performance?

Their performance hasn't been good, as the bureaucracy is the same.

It takes five to seven years to change them. Also, because of a fear that the Centre will use Article 356 to dismiss them.

What is your opinion about Nathuram Godse who killed Gandhi?

Godse was motivated by (the philosophy of) Akhanda Bharat. *Uske mantavya achhe thhe par usne achhe uddeshya ke liye galat method istemal kiya.* (His intention was good but he used the wrong methods.) Initially he was a member of the Congress, later he joined the RSS and left it subsequently, saying that it was a slow organization. Then he formed his own group. He was shocked to see crores of people migrate (from Pakistan) and wanted to kill all the leaders.

First published in *Outlook*, 19 January 1998.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948 was a declaration of war and a statement of intent. For the forces who conspired in the killing, the act was a declaration of war with the secular, democratic Indian state and all those who stood to affirm these principles, as well as an announcement of a lasting commitment to India as a 'Hindu Rashtra'. It was also an act to signal the elimination of all that India's national movement against imperialism stood for.

Beyond Doubt is a dossier of historical and critical documents that aims to contextualize the politics, motivations and circumstances behind the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Attempts to legitimize the act of killing and to celebrate the killers have re-doubled since May 2014, following the coming to power of the new regime in New Delhi. The time is right, therefore, to set the record straight.

The visceral hatred directed against Gandhi and the denigration of everything he stood for need to be recounted if we are to understand the *political* nature of that dastardly act. This book attempts to weave together archival documents from Government of India records relating to developments after the assassination, with translation of works in Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi de-constructing the ideology responsible for the political killing. While several of the documents have appeared before in issues of *Communalism Combat*, this compilation presents new material on the subject. The first English translation of Jagan Phadnis's book, *Mahatmyache Akher*, forms part of the dossier, as do Y.D. Phadke's analysis of attempts to legitimize Gandhi's killing and Chunibhai Vaidya's analysis of Pradeep Dalvi's play on Godse. It also covers the recent controversy over the destruction of files relating to Gandhi's assassination by Government of India.

A second volume of this dossier brings to readers the Report of the Justice Kapur Commission, constituted to investigate the Gandhi assassination, with a detailed introduction and notes.

Teesta Setalvad is a senior journalist, educationist and activist. She is co-editor of the monthly *Communalism Combat*, along with Javed Anand. Setalvad is involved with broadening the boundaries of history and social studies teaching through KHOJ, a programme for secular education, and has worked extensively on exclusion and communalization in school curricula and textbooks. She has analysed and documented the communalization of India's law and order machinery, and the building up of communal conflict in Gujarat, since the early 1990s. Trained also in law, Setalvad was convenor of the Concerned Citizens Tribunal – Crimes Against Humanity, Gujarat 2002, headed by Justices V.R. Krishna Iyer, P.B. Sawant and Hosbet Suresh. She is secretary of Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), a civil rights group set up by her and other concerned citizens of Mumbai in April 2002.

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